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The Domestic Adventurers



Josephine Daskam Bacon

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**THE
DOMESTIC ADVENTURERS**

BOOKS BY JOSEPHINE DASKAM BACON

PUBLISHED BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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The days she had to pose were Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

THE DOMESTIC ADVENTURERS

BY
JOSEPHINE DA-KAMU-LOO.

ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS,
1874.



THE DOMESTIC ADVENTURERS

BY

JOSEPHINE DASKAM BACON

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK

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TO
J. F. M.
STAUNCHEST OF FRIENDS
THIS LITTLE
CHRONICLE OF FRIENDSHIP
IS DEDICATED

J. D. B.

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PART I



MAMIE

SABINA says it is ridiculous to maintain that women are not naturally as domestic as men; she wants a comfortable place of her own to come home to, after office hours, quite as much as any man does, she says, though she may not be quite as willing to marry in order to get it as he appears to be.

On reading these sentences over I find they have an odd sound; but I am sure they are just as Sabina said them. She is a most practical person, and very successful in everything she does; so when she decided that we could afford to rent a house of our own, outside of town somewhere, and have a horse and buggy, pos-

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sibly, and a small garden, probably, and the laundry done in the house, certainly, I knew that we could.

We have been together seven years: One in one bedroom, two in two bedrooms, three in two bedrooms and a sitting-room, and one in two bedrooms, a sitting-room, and a bath. When Sabina added the Things-I-Have-Found-Out-to-Make-it-Easy-for-You pages to her department, and the circulation went up immediately, her salary went up immediately, too, and naturally we began to talk about an apartment. I suppose we should have been there now except for Chloe.

I had always known that Chloe was a fine-looking girl, but I never realized how handsome she was till I saw her in the big plumed hat her cousin, Mrs. Stuy-

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vesant, bought just before she went into mourning. Sabina told her she was altogether too well dressed to be wandering about alone in the evening, but it appeared that Mr. Ogden was hunting for tickets to something at the hotel around the corner. (I think myself it will really be Mr. Ogden, and we hope so; it will be such a good thing to get Chloe settled.) While I was hastily dressing, for they wanted me to go, and Mr. Ogden was getting three tickets, Sabina mentioned the apartment idea.

“ Oh, don’t do that,” Chloe interrupted in that breezy, casual way of hers. “ Get right out altogether, why don’t you? Everybody’s going out of town, you know. Go out Greenwich way, and then you’ll be near Anna Stuyvesant, and that will be so convenient for me.”

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That remark is the best portrait of Chloe that I could possibly draw you if I had Henry James's pencil and George Meredith's eraser.

"Isn't Greenwich a little expensive for the non-Stuyvesant portion of your acquaintance?" Sabina inquired with a certain amount of sarcasm. With all her good sense Sabina has never been able to keep herself from being sarcastic with Chloe. It is a terrible waste of very good, useful sarcasm, though.

"But you needn't go exactly *in* Greenwich, Bina—there are all sorts of towns all about, and it's all the same with a motor," Chloe explained.

Sabina snorted, and began to read manuscript.

"You could keep house, you know," said Chloe to me, "and just think what a

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fine place it would be to bring the fresh-air children to! You could start a day nursery, too. And I'll tell you something else. You find a nice little place out there somewhere, something with gables — there's a sort of ivy stuff that grows awfully fast—and I'll come out and live with you! I can take Anna's baby Steinway any time I have a place to put it—she's disgusted with it. Wouldn't that be jolly, though?"

I gasped, and Sabina gasped, and Mr. Ogden gasped in the doorway.

"You are very kind," Sabina began finally, "but wouldn't it interfere with your breakfast? You'd have to start for school before nine o'clock, I'm afraid, to get up on the West Side in time."

"Oh, I don't believe so," said Chloe, and it occurred to me for a moment that

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she might possibly be serious. "I told Miss Martin that if I had to do so much *matinée* work with the girls, and go to the skating-rink once a week, and chaperon the advanced fencing, now, she'd have to let me off that Greek sculpture and elocution, Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. That's all I have before ten now. She said, 'Very well.' And Anna would let the Panhard meet me at Forty-second street, I'm sure, after Satterlee had been dropped at the office, and that would take me up in no time."

"'She said, very well!'" Sabina repeated. "Will you tell me, Chloe, for what you consider Miss Martin is paying you, as it is?"

I noticed Chloe's eyes somehow as she laughed that fascinating little laugh of hers and patted Sabina's shoulder like

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a big baby that wants to keep friends with you and be naughty at the same time.

“Bina dear, Miss Martin will *raise* me if I come every day in the motor!” she said as we went out.

There is no denying the shrewdness that I see sometimes in Chloe’s dancing, irresponsible eyes. Mr. Ogden called them that.

“Did you ever see a creature with such dancing, irresponsible eyes?” he asked me one evening, when Chloe was dressing in my room and he was waiting for her. It has been very pleasant for me, because they nearly always take me with them. Chloe is so much with the Stuyvesant set that she doesn’t quite like to go out without a chaperon, though she admits that she never would have thought about it,

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probably, if she'd been situated like the other teachers at Miss Martin's.

I never gave her suggestion a thought that night, but when I got home, Sabina was still reading her manuscripts, and the first thing she said to me was, "It's ridiculously characteristic of that girl to upset so airily in one sentence the plans of two sensible people—plans they've been planning for seven years."

"Why, you don't think she meant it?" said I. "I never gave it another thought."

"Not about her living with us, certainly," said Sabina. "I should hope you wouldn't. A flirtatious cyclone with intermittent millionaire friends may be stimulating, but I get all the excitement I need at the office, and if you *did* start a day nursery there, you'd probably have all

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you could attend to, with the housekeeping, without taking the entire care of her—clothes and beaux and woes—as you would, you know perfectly well.”

“Why—why—were you *thinking* of the country, Sabina?” said I hesitatingly, for it seemed too good to be true.

“There’s a great deal to be said for it,” Sabina replied thoughtfully. “We could make on the rent what I should lose in commutation.”

But of course that was only the first step toward considering the matter, and I went on looking up apartments, in order to have statistics and comparative advantages and that sort of thing to discuss. I should never have mentioned the matter to Chloe except that she came in to ask if she might give a chafing-dish supper in our sitting-room after some studio exhibi-

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tion, and while we were discussing what to have, and whether it was really safe to eat tinned lobster, I happened to remember that Sabina had spoken of it. Chloe hardly noticed what I said. She asked me absent-mindedly if I knew anything about Sound View, where a friend of a friend of hers owned real estate and believed in the property, but as she'd never been there herself, there wasn't much to say, of course; and anyway, as she added, she simply refused to imagine Sabina and me out of New York.

So it was a little confusing to Sabina to receive, a week later, a letter from a Mr. Henry Todd, who begged to remind her that he had only allowed her six days' refusal of his Locust Avenue cottage, and that only in view of the exceptional character of the references given by her

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friend. The cottage, he concluded, was one of his most desirable and most easily rentable pieces of property, and if Miss S. Archbold had no intention of coming to Sound View on or before Saturday, would she kindly advise him at her convenience, and oblige hers truly, Henry Todd?

“What does this mean?” Sabina asked me severely. “Who is ‘my friend’? You?”

“No, indeed,” I assured her; “of course not, Sabina. It’s some mistake, of course. But who was mentioning Sound View not so long ago?”

Sabina’s hygienically clear coffee cooled and my cocoa grew scummy while I thought and thought. Suddenly it came to me.

“It must have been Chloe!” I cried.

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Sabina sniffed angrily.

"But she has never been in Sound View," I added, "so how——"

"If she has never been there, it was certainly she," Sabina interrupted coldly.

"I have lived forty years in this world, but I have never encountered in the whole forty years as much feather-headed folly as that girl can display in a week. What is Miss Martin's telephone number?"

I shut the door into her room, where the telephone is, because I am really fond of Chloe, and Sabina can be rather awful. By and by she came out, looking undecided.

"The girl is mad," she said, "but I suppose we had better go. Satterlee Stuyvesant has offered to take us out to Sound View in his motor car this afternoon; we can come back by train. She seems to

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have practically engaged the cottage. It is brown shingles with white trimmings, and will be papered to suit the tenants. There is a Franklin grate in my study, she says. She and Mr. Ogden went out there. There is a golf club. The last tenant had window boxes made, and will sell them for half their cost. There is a Village Improvement Society that does something to the garbage. The man next door will rent his stable. She did not say whether she had bought a horse yet. Have I a large chiffon veil?"

"But, Sabina," I said, in a feeble sort of way, "how many rooms are there? How much is it? Is it near the railroad station? Is there a furnace?"

"I have never been in Sound View," she said. "I am merely repeating our young friend's remarks. She did not mention any

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of the points you have suggested. But it is really only fair to the agent to explain the matter to him personally."

"Sabina," I asked, "do you suppose she got the refusal of it for two persons or for three?"

"How many she got it for, heaven only knows," Sabina replied, "but when I refuse it—it is doubtless one half piazza and the other half drawing-room, with three closets and defective plumbing—I shall refuse it for two."

And yet Sabina is at this moment laying a fire in the Franklin grate, and Mrs. Stuyvesant's Steinway baby-grand is in the drawing-room window, with a peacock-colored priest's robe thrown over it, that Satterlee picked up in Moscow!

It was when I realized that we were

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really living in our own rented house, which turned out, by the way, to be very well arranged, with closets and a good furnace and a refrigerator bought from the last tenants—Chloe suggested to them that they would probably enjoy trying an apartment, and that in that case the refrigerator would be built in, and they actually decided to—that I determined to write an account of our life here with Chloe. For any one could see that there would be things worth writing. And since I have seen the manuscripts Sabina has to read (and the ones she accepts!) I feel more encouraged about my literary efforts. I am sure that if Chloe were put into a book it would turn out to be a novel all by itself, with very little assistance from the author, because wherever she is, things happen, and certainly nothing

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could be more helpful than living with a heroine like that.

A temperament like hers has its disadvantages, however, and one of the most recent disadvantages has been Mamie. Before I begin my character study of Chloe I really must express my mind about Mamie for a page or two; for if I ever *do* get the courage to show this to Sabina, she will understand, when she reads this part, a little of what I have gone through with that girl. Naturally, as I am the housekeeper, I have most to do with the maid, and that being the case, I cannot help feeling that my judgment . . .

But this is not quite fair. If I had seriously objected to Mamie, of course she would not have been engaged. And I did not—seriously. I only felt that a little



She had a real manner, Chloe said, in showing them in.

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more experience would have been desirable. Still it was certainly very sweet of Chloe to save me the trouble of advertising or going to one of those dreadful bureaus. I had discovered a good laundress—to come in for a day and a half a week—and Chloe, going down to her house with a message, saw Mamie, her niece, sitting by the window, on a visit. She said that it struck her immediately what an ideal maid Mamie would make in a blue-and-white-striped gingham, to match her eyes, and a white apron, she flushed so prettily when she came to the door. She had a real manner, Chloe said, in showing them in, and going for her aunt; not coarse and blundering or forward, but just sweetly interested. Mr. Ogden, who was with her at the time, saw it, too, and thought we were in great luck

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to get her. And as Chloe says, no one could have been more willing to learn, and there seemed to be no reason why she should *not* make a good cook in time, with her aunt there every week to help her; only she never did, and her aunt herself told me privately that she never would, in her opinion.

I have never denied that Mamie was very pretty; she was. She had wavy chestnut hair and the most wonderful complexion. I admit cheerfully that she looked nothing less than charming in her striped blue-and-white morning dress, with her plain cap and apron, and Mr. Ogden is by no means the only gentleman who has remarked that she was simply bewitching in her clear blue afternoon uniform, with embroidered capes on her aprons and velvet rosettes for the caps.

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Mr. Ogden had a natural interest in Mamie's afternoon appearance, because he and I shopped for that blue dimity through the entire Twenty-third street district all one afternoon. Chloe had intended to go with us, of course, and she had matched Mamie's eyes most carefully with blue sewing-silk, and we had the silk for a sample. In the station, however, she met one of the teachers from Miss Martin's with *matinée* opera tickets, so she invited the teacher to luncheon (with Mr. Ogden), and dashed off at two o'clock with her. Mr. Ogden watched them jump on the car; the other teacher pulled herself in, but Chloe sprang up like a big girl of fifteen, and actually waved her hand at us.

"What magnificent vitality!" he said; and then, "and what a strange life!

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Tristan and Isolde this afternoon in the top gallery, with that estimable young woman in the shirt waist, and *Aida* next Wednesday night in the Stuyvesants' box, with the Russian *attaché* behind those handsome shoulders!"

"I believe she enjoys one almost as much as the other," said I.

He gave me such a grateful smile. Then he pursed his lips and cocked his head a little.

"I wonder . . ." he said.

We had a terrible time with the dimity, because, as Chloe impressed upon us, Mammie's eyes were real old blue, not china nor aniline blue, and the stuff had to be washed once or twice at least, as Sabina sarcastically added. So we tried to satisfy them both, and I hate to remember what I paid for it. Still it was a very

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pretty idea of Chloe's, not having any black dresses; she thought it would be simple and distinctive, to say nothing of cool in the summer, and, as she very truly says, it is those little details carefully carried out that give the air of personality and selection, when you haven't a great deal of money. There was plenty of distinction in Mamie's dresses—every one noticed them, and one of Chloe's friends, an illustrator, paid her five dollars for posing for him three mornings—but I have never been sure that they were really simple. The dimity had to be washed very carefully, you see, and her aunt took such pains with it that the rest of the laundry suffered terribly, and Sabina complained, for she has lovely underthings, though her dresses are so severe. Then ever since Chloe told her that Anna

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Stuyvesant noticed how neat her finger nails were when she passed the tea, Mamie spent altogether too much of her afternoon on her hands, and I am afraid she used my manicure set. No one could blame the girl for wanting to look nice when everybody praised her appearance so, and I understand perfectly that cleaning rooms, particularly floors, is hard on the appearance. I understand because I had to do it over again after Mamie pretended to.

On the other hand, I appreciate Sabina's point of view when she said that she didn't mind cold meat the first of the week, but that four times a week was a little too much, even if it did save Mamie from being overheated when she served the dinner. And though it cannot be denied that potatoes stain the fingers ter-

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ribly, still I think that Chloe is fonder of rice than most people, and, as Sabina says, she and I must leave some sensations for our Oriental tour.

Then take that matter of the posing. I was glad to have Mamie get the five dollars, just as I am glad of all the tips she gets at week-ends, though I consider it unsettling for her when Satterlee Stuyvesant gives her two dollars just for luncheon and tea. Sabina says he really ought to give me something extra, for of course that poor child couldn't make mayonnaise, and she could never cut bread very thin, she was so afraid of her fingers. The days she had to pose, however, were Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; and as Wednesday is the day for cleaning the second floor, and Thursday Mamie takes her afternoon out, and Friday there is quite a

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little extra to do getting ready for company, it ate up the mornings terribly, though I understand that when the light is good an artist must snatch the opportunity. He sold the picture very well, too, and gave Chloe a studio tea, to celebrate. I made over a little lace jacket that she picked up at a really ridiculous bargain in one of the horrid Sixth Avenue places, as she calls them, and Anna Stuyvesant gave her a Virot hat that certainly suited her far better than it could ever have suited Mrs. Stuyvesant herself.

I couldn't go; I was really too tired to bother with dressing, as any one will understand who has ever chased a Great Dane half over the town and dried him and entertained him so that he won't roll in the road too soon afterward. He belongs to Sabina and has won a prize at

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the Madison Square Dog Show. I have often thought that Pluto was one of Sabina's chief reasons for coming into the country. A friend of hers kept him—for a watch-dog, the idea was—at some little village beyond Harlem, where Sabina could visit him often; but all he watched was the road to the station that Sabina came by, so the friend was quite willing to relinquish him. Sabina is terribly afraid somebody will steal him—he weighs one hundred and thirty-five pounds, and has a voice like a fog horn—and at least once a week I have to go out late at night to see if he is still in his house. Mr. Ogden washed him for me, very kindly—Pluto likes him better than the old darky who washes people's dogs. It is twenty-five cents a dog, but thirty-five for Pluto, because of his size. Mr. Ogden did it out

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of gratitude to me for having done Chloe's Angora cat the week before. That was done in corn-meal and very fussy, and Diana of the Cross Ways dislikes it very much. She was given to Chloe by a very elderly admirer, and she used to spend most of her time at the Dog-and-Cat Hospital, at his expense, because the girls at Miss Martin's overfed her so. She has taken a great fancy to me, and seems to prefer me to Chloe, though she is so uncertain in her temper that no one knows how long the preference will last. The country is very good for her, but she gets frightfully dirty and Chloe can't bear to rub in the corn-meal. She offered to pay Mamie for doing it, but Mamie was afraid of cats, and wouldn't even feed her.

And yet that is the only thing that Mamie ever deliberately refused to do. She

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really had a very sweet disposition, and I never expect to be met at the door with a more charming smile. She liked to sew, too, only she sewed very badly, and there would have been some satisfaction in seeing her with her sewing behind the vines on the side porch if she hadn't ruined everything she touched but dish-towels, and it was absurd to hem those by hand, with a sewing-machine in the house.

Another friend of Chloe's, a woman who makes photographic studies—that dim, artistic kind that always pleases the sitters so much till their friends ask them who it is—made a big panel picture of Mamie, framed in vines on the side porch, and won a prize with it. The prize was twenty-five dollars, and she gave Mamie five. I advised the girl to put it in the bank, but I afterward found out that

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she had bought ten copies of the art magazine in which the picture appeared and sent them to all her friends, and the postage to Ireland was heavy.

I never thought that was very good for Mamie, particularly after the photographic woman posed her drawing out Sabina's breakfast chair and opening the door to an imaginary guest with the Dutch silver card tray that Mrs. Stuyvesant lent us. The woman said she had an unconscious instinct for pose, but even Sabina, whose bargain includes, to use her words, immunity from domestic litigation, suggested that it would be preferable if she had a conscious instinct for book agents. That was what bothered Sabina most: the calm, decided manner that Mamie would assume when she turned away important contributors and illustrators

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who might happen to have anything in their hands, and told book agents, who always have cards, of course, and nothing else if they are clever, "Oh, yes, sir," with the sweetest smile, "Miss S'bina's after lyin' down, but I'm shurre she'll be wantin' to see ye, if ye'll just step in, sir!"

It was the affair of the Oakleigh sisters that definitely settled Sabina's point of view. Of course everybody knows now how clever they are, and how all the magazines are after them and what big prices they get, but very few people know that Sabina discovered them. She saw two drawings and a little story in some small, unimportant English paper that was left in the office, and was much struck with them. So she wrote to M. M. and V. V. Oakleigh, asking them to send her some of their work, and showing how she ap-

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preciated it. They sent a handful of sketches and three good stories, and were so delighted with the check she sent them that they started for America directly. They came straight to us from the steamer, and as I happened to pass them in the road—I was exercising Pluto—and took a long, interested look at them—without, of course, the least notion who they were—I am obliged to admit that they would strike anybody, in this country, at least, as a trifle odd.

They were dressed in tan plaid ulsters, tan shoes, and large, floppy picture hats; Miss May Muriel was dragging everything she had ever written in a worn Gladstone bag, and Miss Vera Vane positively staggered under an enormous portfolio. They gave a loud rap at the door and a long ring, and as Mamie was late

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in changing her dress, and always consumed more time in the operation than any two of us, they did it again. This may have vexed Mamie, for the account given us by the Misses Oakleigh was certainly not pleasant. They expected to throw themselves on Sabina's breast, you see, and they were bubbling over with gratitude and hope, and it must have been discouraging to be told that the ladies were lying down and couldn't be disturbed, that they had company to dinner and more for the evening, and that Pluto didn't care for strangers in the porch.

So they went straight back to town, looked up the first publishing firm in the directory, which was Addison's, of course, and offered them everything. They sold the stories, illustrated, at an average cost of ten pounds apiece!

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It was all explained afterward, but it was very hard for Sabina.

This was partly Chloe's fault, for she very foolishly told Mamie that none of our callers would be likely to be carrying anything. She told us afterward she meant in the way of an agent's or pedler's satchel, and said she had expected Mamie to see what she meant and use her judgment—as if the girl could use what she never had! She told me, too, that a good servant intuitively distinguished between classes, and would develop a sort of feeling as to who her employers' friends would be likely to be; but as Sabina remarked to me, no sort of feeling that *she* had ever developed had enabled her to decide of what class Chloe's next friend was likely to be, and she doubted if an alphabetically arranged list of them,

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with descriptions annexed, would assist Mamie to anything but mania. Moreover, as a matter of fact, when some friend of Satterlee Stuyvesant's, who had met Chloe at a masquerade on the beach and seemed very much smitten, brought her a basket of fish—he looked, he admitted, rather disreputable, but he wanted her to get them fresh—Mamie scolded him for coming to the front door and said the ladies didn't want any fish to-day, anyway.

Chloe felt very bad about it, of course, though it amused Mr. Stuyvesant exceedingly, and he told it every night that she dined with them until she confided to me that she sometimes felt that a great deal of money almost necessarily blunted one's sense of humor, which was a great deal for Chloe to say.

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It didn't seem to me that this incident was so terribly prejudicial to Mamie—you see, I lived with Mamie all day long, and a thing like that could only happen once in a way—particularly as the young gentleman who brought the fish took it very good-naturedly and told Satterlee that Miss Chloe and her maid were altogether too much for any one household and he could hardly make up his mind which to abduct. That seemed to show that he bore no ill will to Mamie.

But I think it set Chloe against her, and she grew more critical from then on.

“Which certainly proves that the girl is more than ordinarily stupid,” she would say—as if the fact needed proof. I had to remind Chloe that when I first suggested that Mamie, though undeniably dimpled, didn't look to me over-bright, to

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put it mildly, she had replied that what I thought was stupidity was only frank ignorance, and that such a width between the eyes was never found with mere vulgar sharpness. She said, too, that it was much better to take an untrained girl and make her just what we wanted, than struggle against the bad habits other people had formed, though it might come a little harder on me in the beginning; and I must say other people of far more experience than Chloe had told me the same thing. The only trouble with that theory is that it leads you to suppose you *can* make anything you wish out of an untrained girl, and I can only say that I defy anybody to make anything but a photographic subject out of Mamie.

Ever since the mint-sauce episode—but I find I can hardly write of it, even, with

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composure. Sabina says I exaggerate it and that it was not so very dreadful, in fact, rather amusing. But Sabina is not the housekeeper of this family, and is thoroughly understood to have no responsibility beyond the share—the large share—of the expenses paid by her. Chloe has been very sweet about it and assures me that old Mr. Bullwinkle would probably have lost what little money she could have afforded to give him to invest, anyway—he is by no means infallible in the stock market. And he tired her to death, anyhow, she is good enough to add.

But the fact remains that he is an epicure and very irritable in spite of his jovial laugh. And he had given her Diana of the Cross Ways. It was partly to see Diana that he came. He has paid so many of her board-bills that he has come to

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value her, Sabina says. Anyway, I had spring lamb for him, and atrociously costly peas, and brandied peaches that Chloe's Kentucky aunt put up for us. Mamie's aunt came in to make the ice cream and oversee the meat, and as I always do the salad and Sabina makes the coffee at the table, I really thought that Mamie might be trusted to attend to the mint sauce, if she put her mind entirely on it. In due time I smelled the vinegar heating and I had measured the sugar myself.

We talked about Diana a great deal, naturally, and old Mr. Bullwinkle was very jocose when the lamb came on.

"Everything reminds us of her ladyship to-night," he said; then, with a polite bow to me, "everything but the food, I am happy to say!" And he poured a per-

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fect flood of sauce on his lamb and on his peas and all over his plate generally, and remarked: "Many thanks, Hebe," to Mamie. He poured so much that I didn't take any; Sabina never touches it, so Chloe took the rest.

"Mint!" said Mr. Bullwinkle. "How fragrant the very word is! I have had a peculiar fondness for it from a boy. And this, I suppose, grows in your own garden, dear Miss Chloe?"

It came from town, like everything else, of course, but Chloe began talking a lot of nonsense about getting up at dawn to pick it out of the brook for him, and just in the middle of the rigmarole she tasted her lamb, and gave the most awful look at me.

"Mint!" said Mr. Bullwinkle again. "It's a poem, that word — hey, Miss



“Take a drink, Mr. Bullwinkle! Please take a drink—it’s camp.”

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Chloe?" And he took a big piece of his lamb. Chloe turned perfectly white.

"What is the matter, my dear?" Sabina asked calmly.

"Take a drink, Mr. Bullwinkle!" Chloe cried suddenly, "please take a drink—it's catnip!"

"Chloe!" we begged, "what do you——"

"Mamie has made mint sauce out of the catnip Mr. Bullwinkle picked for Diana," said Chloe to me in a low, miserable sort of way.

And she had.

I have rarely seen Sabina come so near losing her self-control. Between her and Chloe, who was almost hysterical, it is not to be wondered at that a man of old Mr. Bullwinkle's calibre should have thought it was some horrid practical joke. I hate

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to remember that evening, but every now and then I dream it all over again.

So the next day I told Mamie she must go. She was very sweet about it and looked so pretty; she agreed with me that she was very careless.

“And if the lady sins me anny of thim little kodak pictures, 'm,' will ye throuble to sind thim to me aunt's?” she asked me.

She went out with a respectful bow, ideal to the last.

But it has been a great lesson to me. It has taught me that the appearance of a house-maid, like that of a literary genius, is no indication of what she can accomplish.

PART II



M A Y

I HAVE not mentioned the day nursery yet, because this is really the story of Chloe's life with us, though I cannot seem to keep other matters out of it, somehow. I am afraid this proves that I should never make a writer, for when I sit down with my big leather diary—the others think it is an expense book—and begin to analyze my heroine's character, before I have written five minutes I am absorbed in some petty housekeeping description. It is very annoying, and I sympathize fully with the man in *David Copperfield* who could not keep Charles the First's head out of his narrative. And yet everything seems to lead into these domestic details, and the events of our life here seem to be

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very closely bound up in them. For instance, all the exciting happenings of this last month came from Chloe's spending that afternoon at the day nursery, and nothing else.

It is not a large nursery, because it has not been established very long, and the parish that supports it is not wealthy, but it does a great deal of good, I am sure, and it is growing steadily, if slowly. I was not able to do much for them at first, Mamie took up so much of my time, but I managed to look in once a day and relieve the matron there. So they got in the way of expecting me especially on Fridays, when the matron meets with the committee. I am on the committee, of course, but I always get a little nervous, there is so much discussion, and somebody can always tell me what they decided

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afterward; so I go in and attend to the children while they meet upstairs.

The Friday after Mamie left, I had to stay in to help her aunt, who was tiding us over what we hoped would be a short interval, and Chloe very kindly volunteered to amuse the children in my place, for the hour of the meeting. It was really kind, because though Chloe is very fond of clever, pretty children, with their hair cut like the princes in the tower, she does not care much for the comparatively unattractive ones in the day nursery. She likes little darkies and Japanese babies, too, but unfortunately we have none of these.

I remember I was icing some little cakes when the telephone bell rang sharply and I dropped everything to answer it. One of the great advantages

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of being a business woman is the quickness with which one becomes acclimated to the telephone, so to speak. In Sabina's office it tinkles continually, and she hardly notices it, but I can never outgrow the fear that something sudden has happened, when it calls. As I took down the little black tube, Chloe's voice jumped out at me: "Hello! Would you take a woman with a baby? Probably not. Only I thought I'd tell you."

"Take her? In the nursery, do you mean? We couldn't take the woman," said I.

"No, no; I mean for the house! She's a working housekeeper and she can do the marketing, but she doesn't cost any more on account of the child. It's very quiet. If you don't want her, she's going immediately to old Mr. Aspinwall, but

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the matron says she wants to give you the first chance, if you do. She knows all about her."

"But—but—I wouldn't dare—how could we manage a child? I don't think Sabina would like it. . . . I should have to know what—what is her name?" I stammered.

"You are too ridiculous," said Chloe. What difference does her name make? If you don't want her, say so. It is Mrs. Heidrich. The matron heard that we had no maid—that is, I told her, myself—and Mrs. Heidrich had just come to leave the baby and ask about a place. It's the matron's suggestion."

"But—but a baby—O, Chloe, I don't think we ought to!" I cried.

"It's not such a baby, it's three," she answered, "but no doubt you're right.

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It's very gentle and not a bit mischievous, she says. She would bring it here to the nursery for Saturdays, and Sundays a friend of hers would take care of it, and you see those are the only important days, for it goes to bed at six. Of course if it weren't for that, the whole arrangement would be impossible. Sabina would never stand it. But in that way she need never see it, practically. Still, as you say, it's a great risk."

It was probably the prospect of the marketing that did it.

"Chloe," I said solemnly, "in your judgment——"

"Oh, heavens," she interrupted, "*my* judgment!"

So Mrs. Heidrich came, and though she seemed to me from the first moment unlikely to prove a very accurate working

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housekeeper, she was so lackadaisical and easy going in her manner, still she seemed to know her business, and it was a relief to hear that she had taken the entire charge of an invalid lady's family for a year.

"Then you would not find our work so very difficult, probably," I said, "for of course I expect to take a certain amount of responsibility myself."

I shall not soon forget the effect of Mrs. Heidrich's peculiar laugh as I heard it for the first time. It never ceased to impress me to a certain extent, though I heard it a dozen times a day, afterward. It was nervous and apologetic and patronizing, all in one, and I have never heard its equal off the stage.

"You must excuse me, Miss—er—I didn't catch the name, please?" she said,

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“but I can’t help laughing when I think of you calling your work difficult, and me a married woman with a house of my own for six years!”

“But the care of a child . . .” I suggested.

“Now don’t you put an atom of worry on that matter,” she said; “that child’s no more care than a kitten—you’ll never know there’s one in the house, not hardly. And the other two ladies, certainly not. Why that invalid lady I was telling you about she used to say to me, ‘Where do you keep that child, anyway? Is it a wax doll?’”

This was certainly reassuring, and to tell the truth I didn’t mind so much having the child. I am fond of children, and a quiet little girl, no more trouble than a kitten, one might do quite a little



It was a dreadful shock to see a sandy-haired small boy with his thumb in his mouth sidling along beside Mrs. Heidrich.



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for, I thought. Mr. Van Ness, who had dropped in to call—he had driven up from town to spend Sunday with his sister in Greenwich—smiled his dignified smile and shook his handsome gray head at me.

“It is useless to act so apprehensive, my dear lady,” he said. “Even the stranger within your gates can see that your fingers are itching to curl that child’s hair and adorn her with bows generally!”

You see, we had always thought it would be a little girl, I suppose because of the gentleness and quietness of its reputation, and it was a dreadful shock to see a sandy-haired small boy, with his thumb in his mouth and a very injured expression, sidling along beside Mrs. Heidrich when she appeared Monday

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morning. I was so disappointed that I am afraid I did not conceal it very well when I explained my mistake to her. She laughed her strange, artificial laugh.

“Well, now, that’s too bad,” she said sympathetically; “it reely is. I only wish I could change to oblige you, for boys are the dickens to raise, and you can count on gittin’ something out of a girl, anyway, if it’s only to save your steps. But if you’ll excuse me, isn’t that just the notion you’d expect from an unmarried lady, now? They’re always taking ideas, if you see what I mean.”

“What is his name?” I asked abruptly.

“Solly,” she said, “and mine is Tina, but they usually call me May—Tina May.”

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She disappeared upstairs with Solly and came down a few minutes later without him, and candor compels me to state that no wax doll could have surpassed him in soundlessness. Indeed, when I realized that no one could blame any doll for falling over with a crash after sitting still for three hours, and that Solly had not done this, I began to grow a little nervous, and mounted the stairs to behold him perched on a chair staring fixedly into the mirror over his mother's bureau.

Not that Solly was vain; I do not think his worst enemy could have accused him of that, and certainly he had less cause for vanity than most people. It was merely that his mother had placed him in that position, and from the knowledge of his character subsequently gained by me

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I infer that he would have continued to sit thus, immovable as an idol, till the trump of Judgment, if she had not come to remove him before then. I admit that it was unreasonable in me to have allowed myself to worry about Solly's quietude, since it was the express condition on which he was allowed to come; nevertheless I did.

"Do you think," I said to May—we could not manage "Tina"—"that it is healthful for a child to sit so still? Oughtn't he to be running about out-of-doors?"

This amused her immensely.

"Well, that's the first time I ever heard any complaints of a young one for bein' too well behaved!" she said good-naturedly. "But it's always so with single ladies; they're forever workin' them-

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selves up over the young ones more than those that have 'em! Haven't you noticed it?"

I have never been able to decide whether May was as ingenuous as she looked or whether these remarks were part of a deep-laid plan to keep me out of her way. In the latter case she certainly succeeded; how I used to long to be married—or to have been married—so that I could have had some basis on which to meet her statements!

Take the matter of Solly, for instance. It could not have been wise to allow a child of his age to eat crackers and fruit continually; as Mr. Van Ness put it, very satisfactorily, I thought, the most elementary knowledge of the construction and capacity of the human stomach refutes all the pretensions of matrimony as

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such, no matter how thoroughly or frequently experienced.

It was the effort of my life, at that time, to keep Solly and Mr. Van Ness apart, and so, somewhat naturally, I suppose, I got to connect them hopelessly in my mind—I do to this day, though I suppose no two persons on the face of the earth were ever more unlike.

Mr. Van Ness has been taking Chloe out in the country on long drives a great deal of late, and we are beginning to feel that he may be the one, after all. I remember now that we often spoke of it, Sabina and I, when he met Chloe, a year ago. He had come to see Sabina with his sister, a society woman, who wanted to have some articles written about a pet charity of hers; it was a boarding-house

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for neglected birds, or something like that, and she hoped the Magazine would take the matter up.

He looked like some illustration for a modern story; I had no idea any one's clothes could fit so well outside the tailors' pictures. His hair is very striking and he is just a little portly, as a successful broker ought to be, Sabina says; Chloe was much impressed by him. We decided that the impression was mutual, when, after hearing that Chloe was almost always with us on Friday evenings, he appeared on the very next Friday with an invitation for Sabina to come to a luncheon at his sister's and meet some influential women about the neglected birds' boarding-house. Sabina is not given to match-making for Chloe, but she admitted that everything considered,

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especially the United States mail facilities, it was rather marked.

He even turned up at his sister's after the luncheon, which was very mixed and expensive and amusing, and asked Sabina if her vivacious young friend was well, and after Sabina had assured him of the state of Chloe's health, which is always perfect, she decided that the least she could do was to ask him to call—Miss Martin's is no place to invite any one to visit, except on business.

So he has been coming, off and on, since then, and Chloe has always been very charming, but nothing seems to have come of it. Of course, he is too old for her, for he must be fifty, and that is nearly twice her age, but in Chloe's case there is a great deal to be considered. She has been so much with very wealthy people

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that her tastes and habits have grown frightfully expensive; and then she has always been petted so much that even young people indulge her and treat her just as Mr. Van Ness does, so I really doubt if she sees much difference between his age and Mr. Ogden's.

He was very much entertained by my efforts to drive Solly out-doors to play—I simply could not go about my business feeling that somewhere above my head that soiled and silent little boy was sitting eating, eating steadily, in one fixed place—and at the same time keep him from the sight of chance callers in the afternoon. And though he concealed it perfectly, in what Chloe calls his graven-image manner, I am sure he must have been vastly amused at the event of the luncheon to which he was invited together

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with the Stuyvesants. Chloe thought we had better entertain them at one time, and though I did not think so, Sabina pointed out that she probably wanted to show him to Anna and Satterlee, and when I remembered that it would only be a question of a few more mushrooms and strawberries—May used to make the most delicious fruit ice-cream imaginable—and then they would both be off our minds, I agreed. We had Mamie's aunt in to help; and though May was terribly procrastinating and used to leave everything till the very last minute, and then do the things in the untidiest fashion possible, advising me not to worry, because a married woman with experience was not likely to be rattled, as she put it, by having to hurry a little, she really knew how to cook, and used to bring good

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results out of all her heart-breaking disorder. So I wasn't too bothered over the dinner, particularly as it was the expensive things that May did best; she never took much interest in what Chloe describes as our quiet and retrenching dishes.

"Since you're all alone for luncheon I'll scramble you a couple of eggs," she used to say to me; "a lady, as you're placed, don't care for much at noon when she's alone, usually."

Now I happen to have a reasonably good appetite, and I suppose I might have been allowed to gratify it if I had been married; as it was, I used to accept the eggs and practise scathing remarks to myself.

But May was far too hospitable and too frankly interested in Mr. Van Ness to

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wish to avoid any painstaking on his account, and I am convinced that it was solely in order to outdo herself on some soft-shelled crabs for him that she asked me to attend to the marketing for her and smuggled Solly upstairs, though it was his day for the nursery, and Sabina was in the house, a combination of circumstances which I had vowed should never find him on the premises. As a matter of fact the annoyances I had foreseen had never occurred, as far as Solly was concerned, and beyond advising me to let him alone, Sabina had never mentioned him.

Now by failing to send him with me when I went to the village, May lost her opportunity to get Solly to the nursery, and I forgot him completely. Anybody would have. Sabina maintains that no

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one who encountered him as she did could ever forget him, no matter how preoccupied she might afterward become; but then, few people would be likely to encounter Solly as she did. For Sabina, sweeping into her seat at luncheon—our dining chairs are enormous: Mrs. Stuyvesant got them for her country house and didn't like them—sat down with great dignity upon Solly, who for some inexplicable reason had fallen asleep there.

I have never known Sabina to be so unstrung but once, when the ceiling of the bath room above us fell down and the water poured over her. But terrible and unexpected as that catastrophe was, she says it was on the whole less destructive to her nervous tissue than the one I have just mentioned. She shrieked and turned perfectly white and her clams fell into her

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lap. Everybody rushed to her and she staggered up, positively trembling with horror.

“What — what — oh, *tell* me!” she gasped, pointing behind her. Sabina weighs more than she would like me to state here, though it is really very becoming to her.

“It’s Solly!” I whispered, and Chloe says that only then and only for a moment Mr. Van Ness’s mouth twitched. All through the luncheon, though Anna Stuyvesant was positively incoherent and Satterlee exploded from time to time without the least apology, Mr. Van Ness was as dignified and imperturbable as though he had been quite accustomed to observe his hostess leap up from a prostrate infant in disgraceful trousers and order it, snuffing, from the room.

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May seized Solly at the door and shut him, Chloe says, in the coal cellar; at that time I didn't care what she did with him. Sabina assured me afterward that only the most extraordinary self-restraint kept her from rushing upstairs and taking a bath immediately. I know that for days afterward she never sat down without glancing behind her.

Chloe and I tried to comfort her, later, by telling her how immensely handsome she looked all the afternoon, with her eyes snapping with excitement and her cheeks positively crimson, but she only shook her head.

I supposed of course that May would have to go after that, but to my surprise Sabina said no, not on her account. She was ashamed, she told me, of having shown so little self-control at luncheon

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and she wanted to learn to contemplate Solly without a shudder. But I think there were other reasons, among them the fact that May had taken a great fancy to Pluto and took the most beautiful care of him. She found time to brush him every morning till his brindled coat shone like copper, and she boiled a bone with his dog biscuit and made him fresh corn-meal mush every day, which was very good for him. She gave him his bath, too; and though she neglected the dining-room when she did it—it was the day for cleaning that room that she selected for his bath—I never spoke of it, because I knew Sabina was so pleased with Pluto.

If she had taken half the care of Solly that she lavished on the dog, it would have been more to the purpose, in my opinion, and I asked her once how it was

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that while she was so careful of the quantity and variety, not to say the regularity, of Pluto's meals, she was so indifferent to these matters in her son's case.

To this she returned that Solly's father had been such a dreadful dyspeptic that any attempt to regulate his progeny's diet was worse than useless, and before I had recovered from the effect of this startling communication, she added that it took those that loved animals to understand them and she had noticed that married persons with children of their own seemed to do better with dumb beasts than those who in the nature of things could have had no experience!

If ever I should marry I want Sabina to understand that it is Tina May Heidrich who will have driven me to it.

I am beginning to think that I am

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quite as likely to marry, for that matter, as Chloe. I do not understand the girl at all. She cannot be said to be indifferent to either of her two suitors, for she takes a great deal of pains to entertain them, dresses her prettiest for them, repeats their remarks most appreciatively to us, and acts generally as—well, to tell the truth, she acts just as she has been acting with all her admirers ever since she came to New York. That is to say, she refuses to admit that there is anything serious in what we think ought to be regarded as a real crisis in her life. Indeed she has always amused herself by pretending that Mr. Ogden is desperately in love with me, possibly because, she says, of my shamelessly displayed fondness for him, and that both Mr. Van Ness and his sister are systematically pursuing Sabina! “Your



On the return trip Mr. Van Ness gravely invites Sabina up beside him and Chloe chuckles behind with Pluto.



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elderly charmer" she calls him, when he brings Sabina some strange and hideously expensive orchids. He is certainly a model of decorum; he never presents Chloe with an enormous box of chocolates without bringing me an exquisite little hamper of fruit and Sabina some flowers. He has never asked Chloe anywhere alone, and as I feel myself quite incapable of entertaining him, Sabina goes with them on Saturdays, sitting in the back seat of his high, gorgeous English cart, with Pluto, who loves driving. That is, she sits there half of the time. On the return trip Mr. Van Ness gravely invites her up beside him, and Chloe chuckles behind with Pluto. It is a very fortunate thing for Chloe that Mr. Van Ness prefers driving a pair to motoring, for Sabina has never cared for motor cars, and I am afraid that even

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her real interest in Chloe's future would not drag her out in one for an entire afternoon almost every week.

It was while they were on one of those excursions that the dreadful thing happened, the results of which are still hanging over us. And yet we acted from the kindest motives, Mr. Ogden and I. It was particularly kind of Mr. Ogden, for what was Solly to him, and how many young men would have thought of an unattractive child's pleasure when he had just been disappointed in his own? He came hoping we would all go with him to a funny little country circus that afternoon. It seems that he had spoken of it to Chloe the week before and she had all but accepted, and then had either forgotten it or deliberately preferred to go with Mr. Van Ness. She is capable of either course.

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He had bought the tickets and was really quite disappointed. I had to tell him where she had gone. He took it very quietly, however, and said that it was probably a misunderstanding on his part. Then his eyes fell on Solly, who was sitting in his little chair in the side yard staring heavily at nothing; I had insisted on his playing out-of-doors, and he rewarded my solicitude by acting like a particularly stupid martyr.

"See here," Mr. Ogden said with a rather touching effort at light-heartedness, "let us go, you and I, and take that forsaken-looking child! Did he ever enjoy himself? I'd like to give him something he never had before. What do you say? There's a menagerie."

Now it is Chloe who loves the small circuses; I find the board seats rather

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trying, and the performers always seem a little sad to me, somehow, when one sees them at such close range. But I thought it was tremendously considerate of Mr. Ogden, in more than one way; not to give the whole thing up, as a matter of course, because Chloe could not go, certainly showed thoughtfulness of my feelings, and to be willing to appear in public with Solly's trousers was pure altruism. I, too, felt it would be pleasant to give Solly something he had never had before.

And we did. We gave him the measles. Four days after he had exposed us all, he came down with them, and then I found out that the marked increase of snuffling, which May had assured me was merely a legacy—his only one—from a father afflicted with hay fever, had really

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been a portent. When I demanded of her, somewhat acidly, I fear, how she accounted for the failure of a married woman with children of her own to grasp instinctively the symptoms of so normal a childish malady, she was for once in our acquaintance without an answer.

The days that followed seem to me now to have been a kind of carbolic-scented nightmare. Neither Sabina nor Chloe have ever had the measles, and it was exactly like May not to have had them, either. She admitted that she had a weak throat and a high susceptibility to any disease and had the assurance to add that her chief reason for denying Solly the pleasures of the theatre and circus had always been the fear of precisely what had happened. It was maddening.

Sabina, after one day of it—I had

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hung the halls with carbolic-sponged sheets—packed her steamer trunk and fled to town; she said if it had been any one but Solly she could have stayed, but she felt that she should take anything from him. Chloe could not, of course, go back to Miss Martin's, and it was graduation week and Miss Martin was very cross about it. Chloe very nearly sulked about the house; it was hard for her, I know, and nobody came to see us, for Mr. Ogden, who felt terribly about it, had taken the measles himself, and was laid up in town with a nurse.

I took care of Solly, because I have had every disease a child could possibly have, and May was really more useful in the kitchen. She used to stand on the lower porch and ask me as I stood in the window how Solly was getting on, explain

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to me how she was so sympathetic that nursing made her too faint to be of any use—and then go into the yard and anoint the bad spot on Pluto's leg with carbolated vaseline and coax him into eating sulphur! I had my meals sent up, and as Solly refused to touch food unless I ate exactly what and when he did, they were not very exciting. He was not hard to take care of otherwise, he was such a quiet little fellow, and of course, under the circumstances, to nurse him was my plain duty; but I should never have supposed that I could take so little interest in any child; he was positively depressing.

I was quite disappointed that Mr. Van Ness did not improve his opportunity a little more. That is, I tried to be, because Sabina felt that it was so much to Chloe's

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best interests to be settled so charmingly. His smile is certainly delightful, and he and Chloe have so many tastes in common that, after all, the difference in age is not such a barrier. Men, I know, are much younger than women at the same age, and it is not as if Chloe were a school-girl. She does not talk any more about being "almost thirty," as she used to three years ago—at twenty-nine it is too nearly true.

The last time they got back from their drive and we told them about Solly and the circus, I saw her eyes travel swiftly from Mr. Van Ness, high on the box, irreproachable from his whip lash to his gaiters, to Mr. Ogden, a little rumped, chattering in his nonsensical way and smelling, I am afraid, of peanuts. She glanced back and forth, with such a curi-

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ous expression, from one to the other—I wondered if Mr. Van Ness had asked her on the drive. Afterward I decided he had not, or if he had that she must have refused him, for during all the time we were shut in he never came to call.

Exercise out-of-doors would have been the best thing for Chloe and there was practically no danger, for she had nothing to do with me or Solly and sat on the porch most of the time, reading; so the way would have been perfectly clear for Mr. Van Ness, if his sense of decorum had not been so insurmountable. I must say I grew a little impatient. I wanted to get it over, and Pluto could have chaperoned them—in the country! But beyond the politest note and a beautiful basket of fruit later, we never heard from him.

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Poor Mr. Ogden used to send us the most amusing little letters almost every day. As he dictated them to his nurse, they couldn't very well be particularly private or tender in their nature, so they were written to both of us; I thought the bits especially for Chloe were very cleverly worded, but she didn't or wouldn't notice them. She said she thought it a little silly in a man of thirty to have the measles, which was certainly unreasonable. I should have liked to retort that it was sillier in a man of fifty to be afraid of them, which was a perfectly possible method of accounting for Mr. Van Ness's behavior, but I didn't—I knew she was thinking of it.

I had never paid very much attention to May's criticisms on my care of Solly, as they seemed to be based entirely on the

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experience of a sister of hers who had lost four children under ten, all intrusted to her exclusive care at the time of their death. It seemed to me that in view of these facts almost any one, no matter how unmarried, was justified in ignoring advice from such a source, and May's placid acceptance of the separation from her offspring had led me to believe that her various complaints were entirely formal and perfunctory.

Imagine my feelings, therefore, the day that I went in for my early morning look at my patient, then on the mend and a little fractious, to find him gone! Down to his last little boiled and disinfected night shirt, every vestige of Solly had departed, and on the pillow where I had last seen his dejected sandy head I found only this note:

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To the Ladies:

I don't doubt you were trying your best but a married woman knows what is wrong, and as I told you my sister buried four. It is terrible so much carbollic and better for dogs. I can't bear to see all the visitors gone and knowing well the reason, though you cannot say I blamed you at the time but he was not used to peanuts. It is not Miss Cloey's fault but I would not spoil her chances for worlds, and if others had experience they would know it is not wise to wait too long. I am not a homopath nor any of my family ever and the medicine is not strong enough, and no child should be drove out of the house all day. Give Plutow one tablespoon sulphur every other day for two times more, and I remain your respectfully

TINA MAY HEIDRICH.

P. S.—I am going to marry a gentleman whose cousin is a doctor so Solly will get the proper care, and I am sorry about no notice, but I know what ideas single ladies have and this is the easiest way to take him, they will not know about his measels where I am taking him so there will be no trouble.

MRS. HEIDRICH.

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I sent this note to the boarding-house and Sabina wrote me from the office on a postal card:

Home in a day or two; use formaldehyde; apparently experience is not the best teacher, so do not get another married one.

S. A.

But of course I went for Mamie's aunt.

PART III

PART III

MARY

CHLOE looked solemnly at me with May's letter in her hand.

"I want it distinctly understood," she said decisively, "that from this day on I am dumb—dumb as a deaf-mute, on the servant question. If I should hear of an angel out of heaven who was simply pining away to come and work for us, I should never mention the fact to you. Let Sabina make some suggestions—she seems to know so well what *not* to get!"

But Sabina's "immunity from domestic litigation" was too definite a clause in our arrangements to be overlooked. Besides this, she has been, if anything, less interested than ever in our little house-

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hold crises since she came back. She was very busy in the office, and at our old boarding-house, of course, there was never a hint of any sort of friction, and I suppose she readily got back into the way of taking everything convenient for granted. I cannot help remarking the difference that has crept into our points of view since I took up housekeeping: May's letter, which represented to me the enormity of leaving without notice and the ingratitude of an ignorant person, appeals to Sabina chiefly as a humorous literary production. She admits this, and says that I lack the necessary perspective for properly appreciating the incident—but how am I to get the perspective while I am wrestling with the problem? It occurs to me that this may explain the lack of humor of which my sex is accused.

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Sabina suggested Chloe's showing the letter to Mr. Van Ness, but Chloe refused. I think she was allowing him to see that she resented his leaving us alone so long, for when he appeared again, a few days after the house was in order and the disinfectants had nearly faded away, she stayed at home with Mr. Ogden, who had come the same day, rather tottery but jolly as ever, and seemed quite shocked when Mr. Van Ness suggested that she should come out to a little spin nevertheless—as if she had not done it more than once before! Sabina was quite cross with her and told me afterward that Chloe acted viciously and didn't deserve either of them. She said Pluto was counting on the drive.

However, I was glad at the time that they didn't go; though heaven knows I

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have repented it often enough during this last month, for if I had been left alone to entertain Mr. Ogden, I should have taken no special notice of his ideas on the solution of the domestic service problem, whereas Chloe took them seriously enough to—but no one could have blamed her, the coincidence was so extraordinary.

For reasons best known to herself she practically ignored Mr. Van Ness that day, and sat with Mr. Ogden (she calls him “your young friend,” with an enigmatical glance at me), making our experiences with May sound so amusing that I began to think Sabina was right and that I *had* lost my perspective. Still, they had neither of them shared Solly’s broth and cereals for a week!

“And I hope we all see now,” she con-

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cluded, looking straight over my head, "what I suspected from the beginning—that an American is simply impossible. You see, we have no servant class. It must be foreigners—or monkeys."

Mr. Van Ness, who was sitting by Sabina, caught this and nodded.

"Quite right," he said, "that's what my sister says. Monkeys. And when you see her new Japanese butler you will think she has one."

This he addressed to all of us, with his usual politeness, but for the moment I was cross enough at Chloe to hope she would never see that butler. "What she had always suspected," indeed! I immediately lost my perspective again. I am sure of this, because if I had kept it I should have laughed at Mr. Ogden's next speech, instead of agreeing with him,

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which I did, I am afraid, chiefly because it contradicted Chloe, just as he made it, I am equally afraid, to contradict Mr. Van Ness.

“It seems to me you’re on the wrong tack,” he said, “because, as fast as the foreigners get to amount to anything, they quit the servant class and go into something better, don’t they? On that basis the monkeys would very soon evolve into foreigners, you see, and what would be left? My mother says that we must get back to the old ‘hired help’: social equals, you know, or nearly so, and make ’em see the dignity of labor, and all that. She comes out strong on it—you ought to hear her! Now *I* should think, if you ask *me*——”

None of us had asked him, of course; why on earth should we? But that is a

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remark very characteristic of Mr. Ogden, and he always goes on without waiting for the least encouragement.

“——If you ask *me*,” he repeated, “that what you ladies want is a somewhat exceptional kind of person. Somebody who is really fond of house work, you know ” (oh, why didn’t we stop him?) “and isn’t doing it just because she hasn’t the sense—or the nerve—to do anything else. There must be women left, intelligent women, who like that sort of work—women used to.”

Of course the proper thing to have said to this didactic young man at this point was, “How do you know they used to?” But nobody did. Mr. Van Ness paid no attention whatever to him, which was his usual course, and Sabina politely followed Mr. Van Ness’s lead, which was her

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usual course. At that very moment, indeed, it occurred to me with renewed force that Sabina and I were both of us wasting a great deal of time and attention on that graceless Chloe and her lovers, and that she would probably have settled her affairs much more promptly if she had not been able to depend upon us to repair her alternate neglect and favoritism. But I listened, polite as Sabina at the other end of the room, to Mr. Ogden.

“There must be somebody,” he went on, “who is tired of trying to make a living at other work, where the competition is frightful, who would be glad of a good home, and who would have brains enough to treat the work scientifically, you know, and—oh, well, the way you would yourself. It must be

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a lot healthier than working in a factory."

"Are you acquainted with many of these persons you describe so feelingly?" said I.

I saw that he was looking at Chloe and followed his eyes. She had all the appearance of a child that tries not to talk during a church service: short of holding her tongue with her fingers, she was a pantomime of determined silence.

"What is it?" I asked.

Her eyes sparkled, but she shook her head. "I—oh, it is too ridiculous!" she burst out at last.

"Perhaps you know of one of these fictions of Mr. Ogden's brain?" I suggested.

"She's not a fiction—but I shall never tell you!" she declared.

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"Chloe," I said severely, "don't be childish. If you really know of anybody——"

"I swear to you that I should never have mentioned her if he hadn't described her," she assured me solemnly, "never! She is just like that—she was in college, a sophomore, and her eyes gave out and the doctor said housework would be the best thing for her. Editha Evans wrote me about her—I got the letter this morning. She was our senior president, you know, and she's teaching up there now. She's just as managing as ever, and the girl was in her classes, and she's telling every one she knows about her so they can find her a place. She's a poor girl and very plain, Editha says, but she always had high marks. She wouldn't expect to eat at the table."

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"There, now!" cried Mr. Ogden triumphantly, "what did I tell you? Exactly what you want!"

I looked at him scornfully.

"Has she any other qualifications besides weak eyes and high marks?" I inquired.

"She has had two terms at a cooking-school," said Chloe defiantly, "and she's going to study Domestic Science—whatever that is—when she gets money enough. She is extremely sensible, Editha says. Of course she won't wash—she isn't strong enough."

Sabina caught this last sentence and looked despairingly at me. She says that between Chloe's amusing monologues on the subject and my serious problems we are growing into a household of one topic. I met her look firmly.

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"Sabina," I said, "what would you think of an educated cook, of a waitress that had been to college, of a chambermaid that wins high marks?"

"In my own experience," replied Sabina with her most business-like air, "I have never found the situation where brains, supplemented by training, failed to tell. I cannot see why the labor of a household should form an exception to this rule."

So Mary Bostwick came. She came with an immense box of books, a small cast of the Winged Victory wrapped in a couch pillow and a combination of pulleys and elastic ropes quite unknown to me.

"Have you any objection to my attaching this to my bedroom door?" she inquired of me, in a manner so imper-

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sonal that Sabina's office tones, compared with it, seemed warm and intimate.

"No, indeed, Mary," I hastened to assure her. I supposed vaguely that it must have something to do with the study of Domestic Science, and it was some time before I learned to connect it with the mysterious groanings and creakings of what might have been a fatigued lawn mower that waked me with a disgusting regularity every morning. Though every evidence of my senses pointed to the sounds coming from over my bed, I refused to believe this for some time, it seemed so unreasonable, and it was in the utmost innocence that I inquired of Mary if she had been disturbed by them. She flushed a dark brick-red and pressed her lips very thinly together.

"It is my chest weights," she said, "I

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am sorry they annoy you. I ought to use them night and morning for fifteen minutes, but of course I will stop it immediately."

And equally of course she didn't. It was bad enough to have hurt her feelings so terribly, without injuring her health; and I accustomed myself to the weights, which I privately oiled, long before I grew used to Mary's feelings, which I had no means of oiling, unfortunately.

I have never known any one who had so many feelings. Sabina accuses me of directing the table conversation with a view to Mary's feelings, exclusively. While this is hardly true, I admit that I have sometimes felt obliged to steer Chloe and Mr. Ogden away from certain subjects: why, for instance, should they select a piazza luncheon, with Mary run-

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ning back and forth every minute, to discuss the uselessness of a college education for a woman who does not expect to earn her living by it? Mr. Ogden's descriptions of blue-stockings kept me on pins and needles, for it seemed to me he must have noticed Mary's high, spectacled forehead and straight hair, and Chloe's frivolous recommendations of the higher education on the ground that one forgot everything but four recipes for chocolate confectionery was even worse; I could feel Mary stiffening behind my chair.

She has taken a dislike to Chloe, on general grounds of frivolity and low standards of life, I suppose, and I am sorry to say that Chloe has rather fostered this by her careless behavior.

It began with the affair of Mary's room. I took a special interest in getting

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it ready for her, and made some new sash curtains and a light counterpane of cream-colored muslin with rose-buds scattered over it, and picked up two remnants of a very good carpet with roses on it, to lie before the bed and bureau. I also borrowed from Chloe a pretty modern Madonna, the gift of a loving pupil, in a deep oak frame, and took down from the hall a little photogravure of an orchard in bloom to give the room a home-like look. I was quite pleased with it when it was done, and by the time I had added a small hanging book-shelf with a few odd books, it was really, except for the wall-paper, which might have been nicer, pleasant enough for a guest room.

When Mary said to me, the day after she came,

“Would you have any objection to my

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changing the furniture a little in my room?" I was so much impressed by her scrupulous consideration in asking my permission for such a small thing, that I forgot to wonder what she could want to alter in such a simple arrangement. When she disappeared behind a somewhat ostentatiously locked door for a whole afternoon, I knew that something important was going on over my head, but I was quite unprepared for what met my eyes as I mounted the stairs an hour before dinner to remind Mary that even two terms in a cooking-school could hardly enable one to prepare a hot dinner in less than that time.

In the upper hall stood a pile of matting—Mamie's aunt had spent an afternoon putting it down—and on it was bestowed in neat order the rose-bud counterpane

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I would not confess, even to Sabina, that I felt a little disappointed, but I suppose I must have for I could not resist saying a little critically,

“Do you like the room better this way, Mary? It looks a little cheerless to me.”

“It is not all that I could wish,” she returned in a minor key, and I saw suddenly that I had hurt her feelings, “but it is the best I can expect under the circumstances. I suppose all authorities agree about a hardwood floor for sleeping rooms, and draperies, as you know, attract and hold the dust. My heavy books would break that little case and I am not fond of Madonnas. May I ask you for a dark-green window shade?”

I felt, somehow, as if I had thrown her poverty in her face, and it made me so uncomfortable that I said nothing about

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the spots on my ceiling where her scrubbing water had penetrated—I was afraid of hurting her feelings again.

Chloe was highly amused at the result of my efforts to make Mary feel at home, and regaled Mr. Ogden with her version of the affair after dinner, one evening; I had managed with great difficulty, to keep her from the subject during the meal. I say with difficulty, because she and Mr. Ogden took an impish pleasure in skating as near to it as possible while Mary was in the room and hurriedly trying to discuss it while she was in the kitchen. Between them they got me into a state of nervous irritation which Sabina quite failed to relieve by assuring me that this intimate, if somewhat childish fooling, on their part, together with Mr. Ogden's bold-faced requests for dinner in-

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vitations, indicated very clearly to her that Chloe was coming to a decision.

"She would never argue so with him if she didn't love him," Sabina concluded.

"What nonsense!" said I. "Heaven knows I argue enough with him—am I in love with him? She is paying all this attention to him merely to make Mr. Van Ness jealous: the girl is a born coquette."

"If that is the case, I should say she had failed conspicuously," Sabina returned, "for I have never seen a person who exhibited fewer signs of jealousy."

"In this connection it seems to me that you, too, lack perspective!" I said snappishly. . . .

Sabina and I were quarrelling!

And meanwhile, in the living room, Chloe, with bursts and gurgles and all those little nods and gestures that make

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listening to her so pleasant, was describing Mary's hygienic room, and Mary, eating in the dining-room, heard every word! You see, Editha Evans had suggested that perhaps it would be easier for Mary to take her meals at the table, after we had left it, and though Sabina felt from the beginning that any departure from the ordinary course was unwise and that Mary had better conform to the general usage, she admitted that there was no serious harm in it, and so Mary used to draw the portière ceremonially as we left the room, and for some time afterward we would hear the subdued chink of her solitary feeding. If it is true that Mr. Gladstone was accustomed to devote thirty-two bites to each mouthful, it would have been an object lesson for a gorging and dyspeptic generation to see

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him and Mary Bostwick dining together:
I used to think she would never finish.

Chloe flatly refused to apologize to Mary for making fun of her, and I don't know that she should have gone quite so far as that, but I did hope she could find something to say to make her feel better; and to please me, she tried.

"Just jolly her along," Mr. Ogden suggested; "talk about the dear old college days, and those happy hours you used to spend doing Sanskrit together! Remind her of the mad rush for the basket ball, when the whole field was against you, and you and she fought shoulder to shoulder and saved the day! Call to her mind those moonlight nights when you sang arm in arm across the campus, exhilarated with chocolate candy and ice-cream soda!"

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“I suppose,” said Chloe coldly, “you think that is very funny, and I don’t doubt you believe it is true. As a matter of fact, I might have spent four years in the place and never laid eyes on her. I don’t know much about the Sanskrit part, but if you think Mary Bostwick ever wasted a moment on anything so foolish as basket-ball or ate anything so unhygienic as ice-cream soda, you don’t know her. You’d better jolly her along yourself — you seem to understand the process!”

They have been wrangling like this continually of late, and Sabina says it is only a question of time, now. She expects them to announce it very soon. I cannot understand why, in that case, Mr. Van Ness spends the summer with his sister instead of at his Adirondack Club or

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abroad, which is his usual custom, and directs her, as he evidently does, to invite us at least once a fortnight to her yacht or his steam-launch. If Mr. Ogden and Chloe have come to any understanding, why does he allow this; and if he cannot prevent it, how can there be any understanding? And I have never thought that Mr. Van Ness's sister cares very much for Chloe; she would never invite her of her own accord. It must be admitted that the few people who do not think Chloe perfectly charming find her a little trying.

I am afraid Mary is one of these: certainly the "jolly along" was not a success.

"How was she—chilly?" Mr. Ogden asked curiously when the diplomat came back to us.

Chloe shuddered.

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"I have caught a cold," she replied solemnly.

"Pretty hard on you, eh?" he said sympathetically.

"She was stony," said Chloe sadly. "It wasn't on her account, she said, but she hated to have the college so misrepresented."

"Really," Sabina interrupted with a disgusted glance at me, "I think this is going too far. The girl is simply impertinent."

"Oh, no," Chloe answered, and it seemed to me she was honestly a little dispirited; "I gave her the opportunity to say what she liked, you know—that was about all I could do, don't you see. She said that of course in her position she supposed she must expect ridicule from the rich. 'Come, come, Mary,' said I,

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‘don’t be absurd; you know very well you must expect no such thing. It is simply my way—I’d tell a funny story about my own grandmother, if I knew one! You know how I chatter.’

“ ‘Why, certainly, Miss Randolph,’ she said in her stained-glass-martyr manner, ‘no one would dream of attaching any importance to anything you said!’ ”

We gasped.

“Do you think she meant . . .” Mr. Ogden inquired vaguely.

“Heaven knows what she meant,” said Chloe, “but it was probably true, whatever it was—she’s very accurate. It startled me, for a moment, though, and I struck out on a new line.

“ ‘As for my being rich, Mary,’ said I, ‘how much do you suppose I earn? I am paid exactly four hundred and fifty

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dollars a year, and counting your board and lodging, you make more than that and have far lighter expenses. Even with the hundred a year that I have of my own, you are really better off than I.' ”

I saw Mr. Ogden's eyes rest on Chloe's changing face with something more than mere pity.

“Do you mean to say that's all they pay you?” he demanded. “It's a rotten shame!”

“Oh, I don't know,” she said lightly, “it's probably all I'm worth. But that wasn't Mary's view of it, Mr. Ogden. She feels that if I had qualified myself by severe study at college, instead of confining myself to—to being popular, I could be earning a thousand dollars in a city public school, instead of teaching frivolous odds and ends in a fashionable

'don't be afraid, you know what we are
must expect to suffer in this
way—I'd tell a long story, but I marked,
own grandmother. I'll never be the din-
know how I do!"

"Wife, what is it? now let's
she said in her usual manner,
ner, "as we will not do all that even-
any important business, that Mr. Van

We gazed at each other: there is a great

"Do you think," said she, "that shadowed moods
Ogle's imagination has never happened

"Have you seen him and effervescent with
said Ogle, "I have thought him once or twice

where he was in a puzzled, uncertain
state of mind, were wondering whether all

that was said was perfectly sincere. If
one can blame the child; she

applauded and caressed for it,
to her friends and admirers so

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easily, that if she assumes it sometimes to hide a very different heart, I feel it is because she dares not do anything else. It is a mistake, I think, but one cannot very well tell her so: with all her chatter-box ways, there is a vein of deep reserve in Chloe.

"She seems almost pathetic to me, sometimes," said Mr. Ogden suddenly. Chloe had stepped in from the porch to sing to us a little, and his reply to my thoughts startled me.

"Indeed?" I answered rather disingenuously. I felt frightened, somehow, and extremely uncomfortable. Here was the opportunity I had been waiting for; now, in this confidential privacy—for Sabina had excused herself, to read manuscripts—was my chance to discover once for all how matters stood with Mr. Ogden

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and Chloe. He had begun just as I had imagined he might, some evening, with Chloe's voice, small, not especially well trained, but particularly appealing, in our ears, and her chair by ours just empty.

But now that the moment had come, I deliberately escaped it. It made me too nervous; it seemed to me just then that the responsibility was too great—what business of mine was it? And yet I wanted to know as much as ever.

"Let him tell Chloe and let her tell me!" I thought suddenly, and pushed my chair away from him.

"That is an odd adjective to apply to a girl as happy as Chloe," I said lightly. "Aren't you growing a little subtle?"

He is very quick at a suggestion and I doubt if he will ever say anything like

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this again—how could I have been so foolish? Now I shall never know till Chloe tells me, and I think I would rather know before then.

A week ago, to be sure, I thought we should not wait very long. For Mr. Van Ness did a most unheard-of thing: he invited himself to dinner.

“It has been so long since the privilege was extended to me,” he said, deliberately coming over by me, “and since I have been admitted to this charming intimacy, I venture to hope for a little more!”

He meant by this that he was sitting on the side porch watching Chloe do up brandied peaches. She had on a long blue pinafore that made her look like a tall school-girl, her cheeks were scarlet from the stove, and her big white arms bare

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above the elbows. Her hair was most becomingly untidy—she is one of those fortunate people who look attractive with wispy hair—and I did not wonder that Mr. Van Ness could not bear to leave her. If Sabina had seen the amused yet deeply attentive air with which his deep-set gray eyes followed each of her long steps and sweeps of arm as she ladled the sirup over the sticky jars, she would have realized, I think, that this self-contained gentleman is making up his mind very rapidly. But Sabina was not there; she had been detained in town unexpectedly and would just be able to get out to dinner, she telephoned me. It was the first time she had not been there to chaperon “her elderly charmer,” and I was a little worried at the responsibility: he is so very critical.

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once he wanted to be left. As he said, it was quite an intimate situation, and Chloe was so housewifely and picturesque and so demure and sweet with him and he was so handsome and courtly—his eyes are very kind, when you get over your first awe of him—that I really shouldn't have been surprised . . .

But, of course, after what happened in the evening, there was no hope of anything of the sort. It is extraordinary that Mr. Van Ness should inevitably assist at our most idiotic domestic crises, but such is the fact. I am quite certain that he intended speaking that night; all during dinner his eyes travelled from me to Sabina and from her back to me again, and I understood why: he was wondering to which of us he ought to address himself on the subject. My nerves have grown so

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tense during this period of uncertain cross-purposes that I seem to feel too closely what every one is thinking and hoping.

But after what occurred in the hall no one could have been serious.

Not that anything was wrong with the dinner, though Sabina thought it was rather audacious in me to allow him to stay. Mary had been taught to broil a steak very nicely and she garnished everything with mathematical perfection. We can always get good clams at short notice, and Mamie's aunt sent me a delicious canteloupe. It was after Mary had served the coffee on the piazza that it happened.

You see, it was the night for her tutor. Tuesdays and Fridays he came—to save her eyes—and we never invited any one for those nights and I used to hurry din-

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ner along, if I could, without Sabina's suspecting. Of course they used the dining-room—I allowed Mary to use it as a sitting-room in the evening at Miss Evans's suggestion — but as we should spend the evening on the piazza, I didn't think it would matter, and he always left at half-past nine.

I cannot believe that Mary was responsible for it, though I know that our being longer than usual at dinner irritated her, but at about a quarter of nine a loud rap on the French window behind me made me start from my seat.

“ Can I speak to—to somebody? ” said a hollow, solemn voice.

Chloe was at the piano singing some foolish darky music-hall song, and Mr. Van Ness was leaning back, blowing rings from his cigar and watching her.

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I was planning to get Sabina off the piazza on some pretext or other, and then I knew—I absolutely knew—the climax would come: I felt it in the air.

But at the sound of this voice I got up and went into the living-room. Mary's tutor stood there. He was a lank young man, with pale, high cheek-bones and a most self-conscious air, and he wore goggles that extinguished Mary's.

"I should like to speak to you in private, if you please," he said, "I will not detain you long."

Perfectly dumb with surprise, and judging from his intentional glance at Chloe's innocent back that she was the bar to his privacy, I led the way into the hall; the front door, of course, was wide open.

"You are aware, I have no doubt," he announced, "that my pupil here has

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an extremely nervous organization. You
could not fail to observe it."

I stared at him in the dim hall-light, and he went on in a nervous, hissing sort of whisper that carried with dreadful distinctness to the amazed silence outside, over Chloe's soft singing.

"We are working over a very delicate problem in Quadratics this evening," he said, "and it is utterly impossible for Miss Bostwick to concentrate her mind upon it while this—this noise at the piano is going on. She is meeting her misfortunes so nobly that you would not wish, I am sure, to add a straw to them, and it is but for two evenings a week."

I murmured something more or less senseless and he went on.

"It is not music *per se* that Miss Bostwick finds so confusing to her efforts at



"I don't know whether you are acquainted with classical music at all—but there is a difference—a great difference."

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concentration," he said, "but the character of the—the selections this evening. I don't know whether you are acquainted with classical music at all, but there is a difference—a great difference."

Again I murmured vaguely.

"I have taken the responsibility of this step entirely upon myself," he concluded, "because I admire Miss Bostwick's character deeply—it is a privilege to live with a mind like hers—and I felt sure that any right-thinking person would appreciate . . . er . . . yes, good-evening!"

He backed out of the hall, followed by what I knew must be, though I had never heard it before, the deep, irrepressible laughter of Mr. Van Ness. Chloe was such a confusion of mirth and resentment that nobody, even if he had been serious himself, could have made love to her, and

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Sabina's mixture of emotions made her alternately satiric and speechless.

I don't know whether I should have been able to indicate to Mary that the strain of living in her rarefied intellectual atmosphere was too much for us. Sabina would have retreated promptly to her "immunity" clause, and Chloe, of course, was out of the question.

But she, herself, took the matter out of our hands by informing me that she was going to marry the tutor the next week, and go out with him to India, to share his labors as a missionary there.

"Of course I shall stay with you till the day before I go," she said, with her most martyr-like air, "though I shall have a great deal to do. But I would not leave you without proper notice."

"Indeed, Mary, we couldn't think of

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such a thing," I assured her heartily, "it would be inhuman. You will need all your time."

I added further that it would be a great change for both of them.

"For me, yes," she answered, "but not for Mr. Stroker. He has been under similar circumstances, once, to Africa. But he decided to try a more prepared field. He says that Africa is not ready for him yet."

Sabina remarked that in view of her sole experience of Mr. Stroker she could not but feel that Africa, all unprepared as it had proved, was more open to congratulation than she had ever supposed possible for that dark continent.

As for me, I have added one more line to my book of experience: never hire a servant of whom you are unworthy!



PART IV

PART IV



M A R I A

“**W**HY don’t you engage Mamie’s aunt permanently?” Sabina inquired, munching her toast appreciatively: she always enjoyed Mamie’s aunt’s toast.

“Because I cannot afford to pay her a dollar and a quarter a day,” I replied shortly.

“Ah!” said Sabina and returned to her morning paper. Chloe said nothing. Indeed, her silence was so very silent that it was positively alarming. She might have been a polite visitor from another planet, so complete was her detachment.

I don’t know why I should have felt so aggrieved, but I did. I hadn’t a shadow of reason to resent Sabina’s lack of in-

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terest; she was paying for it, and paying well. Sabina attributes her success largely to the fact that she has never dissipated her nervous energy in the ceaseless attempts at domesticity that even professional women persist in, as a rule. She never sews on a button nor presses out a waist nor does her own nails. And as she points out, all these things are far better done for her than they would be if she did them with her mind on something else.

As for Chloe, heaven knows her well-meant assistance had not proved of such value that I should object to the lack of it! But I did. I resented unaccountably their sitting there, Sabina business-like and newspapered, Chloe dreamy and decorative, both of them washing their hands (in the finger-bowls that Mamie's aunt

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filled to overflowing) of my difficulties. If they had been men, now, it would have been different; I remember I said this obstinately to myself, though my conscience reminded me of Sabina's assurance that for all domestic purposes they must be regarded precisely as if they had been members of that exempt sex. Of course she was logically correct — she always is. But it seemed unbearably bitter to me just then that simply because they were what Mary used to call "wage-earners," they should be sitting there in skirts as long as mine, unconcerned though the finger-bowls resembled bathtubs. I might have been a wage-earner, too, if it had not been for my grandfather: it was the first time I ever regretted the few hundreds a year he left me!

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"Really," I said defiantly, riding over all my good resolutions, "I don't see what I am going to do. The servants will not come out here from town—not to this style of establishment, anyway—and there are no decent ones here. I don't like to bother you, either of you, but the matter is growing very serious. It isn't just a question of hunting about a little: there simply is no available supply."

"Why, certainly," said Sabina absently, her eyes on her paper. Chloe buttered toast; her eyes were fixed over my head, apparently on her native and regretted planet.

I lost my control. "Sabina!" I snapped, distinctly snapped.

Sabina dropped the paper and regarded me contritely.

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"I beg your pardon, my dear, I'm sure," she said apologetically.

I might as well have been married!

"Of course what you say is perfectly true," she agreed; "it's a national question, apparently; I appreciate it fully—we get enough of it at the office: everybody sends us queries and remedies and articles. I see Wilkinson gets the assistant editorship of the *Four Seasons*; that will mean a great change in the policy of that magazine, I can tell you!"

I never felt so strangely about Sabina. I understood then why married people bicker and bother each other so.

Of course there is no marrying in heaven: a very little consideration enables you to perceive that the object of marriage is the founding of a family, and families must live in homes, and homes

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require housekeeping, and no angel could keep house—and her reputation as an angel at the same time.

And yet there is simply no excuse for my writing so bitterly. No one could expect to keep house in more auspicious circumstances than mine have been for two weeks past. I have had time for the nursery, time for my character-study, time to accustom myself to the changes that must come . . .

I suppose this is the real reason—the changes. It must be the knowledge of them that takes away my interest in the other things. I have no objection to acknowledging this: it is surely only natural to regret the jolly times we have had together, now that they are so nearly over. For of course they are.

I wonder if Sabina does not care a

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little, herself? When she told me—and she did it very gently, with the kindest efforts to spare my feelings without seeming to—I wondered if she realized what it would mean to her? We have practically given up everything in the last four months, all the quiet little amusements we used to have together, to entertain these monopolizing lovers; and I wonder if we shall not miss them when we are left alone again? For we cannot be quite the same: when she told me—and surely it should have been no special shock to me; have I not foreseen it for a long time?—I realized suddenly that something had come between us, and that Chloe, dear, troublesome Chloe, has been the little wedge that has pushed us apart. Not that I blame the child. She undoubtedly feels that she has brought us good

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luck, amusing companionship, and social opportunities, and any unprejudiced person would have nothing but sympathy for us in our future dulness without her—I am afraid with some reason now!

You see, what hurt me a little was that Sabina should have known and not told me immediately. I don't know how long she had known, and I don't believe Chloe told her: Chloe would sooner tell me, I think. Mr. Van Ness probably told her himself, and I suppose that it was only honorable, under the circumstances, for her to have kept it to herself—Sabina would always do the honorable thing. But four months ago there would have been no such circumstances, and she and I would have known it together.

I brought it on myself in rather a queer way. The situation was growing some-

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what strained at the breakfast table that morning, and Sabina awoke to the fact, though a little late, and applied her mind directly and with her usual practical clearness to the problem in hand.

“It seems to me,” she said, in her most judicial manner, “that you have made one basic error in your selection of servants.” (*My* selection, indeed! Is it possible she didn’t realize who has selected the servants?) “I think I understand the psychology of your choice: you reasoned, perhaps unconsciously, that since this was not quite a normal *ménage*—not a regulation family—we should be better, or at any rate, quite as well, suited with an unusual sort of servant. In other words, you engaged servants that the average family would not want. Mamie, for instance, had no experience—now, we needed

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some experience. May had too much, and presumed on it—we didn't need quite so much. Mary"—here Sabina paused and cleared her throat. She has never been able to discuss Mary.

"Mary was not a servant at all," said Chloe.

"But if we experimented with her in that capacity," Sabina urged.

"Pooh!" Chloe interrupted calmly, "she experimented with us, Sabina—and awful failures we were, too!"

Sabina smiled indulgently at her. You see, she knew, even then.

"It proves my point, either way," she said. "Now, the work of a family of average means, unless it is a doctor's or a night watchman's or—or an aëronaut's, ought to be about the same. What you want is a good, fairly well-trained, aver-

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age servant; not an ignoramus nor a housekeeper nor a scientist; just one who is accustomed to work under a reasonable amount of direction. If such a one costs more than we have hitherto paid, we must manage to pay a little more, that is all. It would be poor economy to wear you out entirely, you know."

I must have been growing very irritable of late, for I replied to this quite ungratefully.

"Is it possible, Sabina," said I, "that you are so ignorant of what the housekeepers of your country have to contend with as to suppose that there is such a thing as the 'well-trained, average servant'?"

There was a trying pause, which Chloe eased suddenly with a reminiscent gurgle.

"It's a pity we're all so moral," she

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said airily, "or we might get Anna Stuyvesant's Penitentiary Paragon."

She was so evidently in jest that I was willing to inquire perfunctorily, "What is that?" Sabina didn't even pretend an interest.

"Surely I've told you about her?" said Chloe, "she is so funny, and Anna is wild with rage at losing her, but she is really too impossible—the other servants complain. Satterlee called her the Penitentiary Paragon, because Anna is sure she has served at least one term behind the bars, but sometimes he calls her the Terrible Treasure, and I think that's best, myself—the Terrible Treasure! She is a Swede, and she can do anything in the world, from hair dressing to milking a cow. Anna got her as a supplementary maid to fill in anywhere upstairs, and

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help the butler in the country—her second man won't go to the beach, you know, he says it makes him melancholy. Well, one night the cook was sick, and Maria got up a delicious dinner. The next time the butler didn't get back in time, and she served a whole luncheon party beautifully. Another time Satterlee had to get the Twentieth Century Limited, if it killed him, and there wasn't a car that could be used, and not a man about that could harness a horse. And Maria went out and harnessed one in four minutes."

"Dear me," said Sabina, looking at her watch, "it seems a distinct waste of good material to keep such a versatile artist in a household presumably full of specialists. It is humble homes like ours that need that sort of ability."

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“Goodness gracious!” Chloe burst out, gurgling again, “to think of Maria in a humble home like ours! What would *she* say?” And she looked solemnly at me.

“What is the matter with her?” I inquired rather coldly. I object as much as most people to being considered narrow-minded.

“It is easier to tell you what isn’t,” she replied. “That’s what I heard Anna say to a friend who asked about her. ‘She has never killed any of us,’ said Anna, ‘and Satterlee says that he doesn’t believe she ever coveted her neighbor’s wife nor his ox nor his ass. He says if she wanted ’em, she wouldn’t waste time coveting ’em—she’d go and get ’em!’”

“Dear, dear!” said Sabina.

“As for the rest of the Commandments,” Chloe continued, “Satterlee said

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it was merely amiable weakness to speak of Maria's breaking 'em: he said she'd pulverized 'em."

"She seems to have impressed Mr. Stuyvesant," Sabina suggested, pushing away her chair.

"I should say she had," Chloe returned. "In the first place, she drank—Satterlee's pet sherry. In the second place, she smoked—his especial cigarettes, made and imported for him; he thinks she took cigars, too. In the third place, she taught Anna's maid, the second man, and the best machinist Satterlee ever had, to play bridge, and then won all their money away from them. Wasn't that terrible?"

"Very," said Sabina drily; "it must have shocked Mr. Stuyvesant unspeakably."

"Oh, well," Chloe murmured, rising

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from the table, "you know very well, Sabina, one can't have one's own servants . . ."

"Certainly not," Sabina agreed, "there must be *some* members of the household who don't play bridge day and night—I quite understand!" Chloe shrugged her shoulders.

"Satterlee wanted to go down and play with them," she added amiably; "he said he might learn something from Maria's game, but Anna wouldn't let him—she was afraid the lessons might prove a little too expensive!"

After Chloe had left the dining-room I glanced casually at Sabina.

"I wonder if an insight into the domestic difficulties of the wealthy necessarily enables one to steer clear of them?" I inquired. "If Chloe *does* marry Mr.

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Van Ness, she will be more able to cope with a butler, for instance, than most girls who have never been addicted to one from infancy. Don't you think so?"

Sabina was going over Pluto carefully, with a view to possible sulphur, and did not look up.

"She won't marry him," she said briefly. Something in her tone vexed me.

"I know we don't agree on that subject," I replied obstinately, "but you must remember that I have had better opportunities than you for unprejudiced observation, where Mr. Van Ness is concerned. I have watched him, while you were occupied with talking to him. If you had been here the day Chloe did the brandied peaches——"

"My dear," said Sabina, still studying Pluto, "I assure you that Chloe

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is not going to marry Mr. Van Ness. Really.”

That was all; she gave me no further explanation and I did not ask for any. When Sabina uses that tone there is no doubt in the listener's mind.

I suppose he wrote to Chloe—it is like him, in some ways—and then told Sabina himself, afterward, when he got his answer, so that we might understand his absence. And of course he would not care to come, now, and of course Chloe had to make her choice sooner or later. She is a healthy, normal girl, after all, and youth clings to youth, if left to its natural instincts. I have been exaggerating the child's worldly wisdom, and Sabina knew her better, after all.

Indeed, I do not wonder that Sabina feels she knows her better than she knows

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me, just now. To tell the truth, I am not quite sure, myself, why I acted as I did a week ago, and neither of my family could have been more amazed than I was at the promptness and decision, not to mention success, of my unexpected course.

I don't remember exactly what I said when Sabina told me about Chloe's decision, but I am quite sure it was something about its being the most natural and pleasant thing for both of them, and Mr. Ogden's income being not so tiny, after all—a clever lawyer always has a good chance.

“And Chloe has had an opportunity to study housekeeping on a moderate income, too,” I added, “so she is not accepting her lot blindly.”

Sabina agreed with a distinct air of relief and it was with evident relief, also,

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that she drew on her gloves and left the house.

I cannot describe how the perception of this relief irritated me. Did she expect me to fall fainting to the floor when she told me? Is it possible that Sabina thinks that I—oh, the whole situation is too absurd! When Chloe is off our hands, Sabina and I must have a thorough explanation, if we are ever to start fresh again after these constraints and misunderstandings. It is useless to deny it—we are not frank with each other.

With a confusion of thoughts like these in my mind, on that extraordinary morning I walked deliberately to the telephone, looked out Anna Stuyvesant's number, and asked her if the extremely able maid of whom Chloe had told me was still in her employ!

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I heard her gasp.

"You—you don't mean Maria?" she demanded.

"Precisely," said I. "Would she care to undertake an establishment like ours? I should expect to pay her well, and I don't think she would find the work hard."

"Chloe is a wretch," Mrs. Stuyvesant declared, trying to keep her voice steady. "The naughty thing was teasing you. The Para—Maria is a very valuable person indeed, but—but there are other considerations. . . . Really, my dear, of all people in the world to be inquiring about Maria, you are the very last person—I suppose that's why Chloe told you about her. It was a joke, my dear, I assure you."

"I know all about Maria," I replied evenly. (Why *is* it that people will persist in regarding me as likely to be

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shocked more easily than the average person? Is it because my eyes are gray and rather far apart?) “And as we have no fine sherries nor imported cigarettes, nor other servants for her to gamble with, it seems to me that with fewer temptations than a *ménage* like yours affords her, she will have fewer opportunities for crime. She has so many and such varied talents, that it is really a pity to waste them in a house with a large staff of servants, don’t you think so?”

There was a longer pause than I have ever known in any conversation in which Anna Stuyvesant takes part. Finally she said very cordially:

“Do you know I think you have more sporting blood than they think? It seems rather startling, at first, but as you say . . . And she can do anything—abso-

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lutely anything. My maid is frightfully jealous of her, and that's the real reason I have to send her away. She watched my hair being done once and then did it beautifully for me, when H  l  ne bruised her finger in the door. But would she go, I wonder? You know they won't usually——”

“You might ask her,” I suggested calmly.

“You are too delicious,” Mrs. Stuyvesant assured me. “I surely will. If only she would, she could take care of you so nicely. Do you know, it's the only way to do—to have just one. Then there are no quarrels, no jealousy—really, I've often said that people with one maid don't realize how fortunate they are!”

“That is very true,” said I grimly, “they quite frequently don't.”

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“And the servants themselves,” Mrs. Stuyvesant continued plaintively, “one would think *they* would like it, too. There would be no others to interfere with them and complain of them and they could do as they pleased——”

“Ask Maria if she would appreciate all those advantages—with us,” I said.

“Do you know,” Anna declared, “Maria is just original enough and obstinate enough to do it!”

But I knew she didn't believe Maria would, nevertheless, and I suppose it was a most audacious proposition on my part. During the rest of the day I wondered at my sudden temerity, and it was with a feeling that I must be dreaming that I saw a neat black figure descend from a runabout stationed in front of the house the next afternoon, and give unmis-

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takable directions regarding a small trunk to Anna Stuyvesant's little groom.

"You understand, Maria," I said, as she stood respectfully before me, irreproachably capped and aproned, "that even though the washing and part of the ironing are done for you, there is still a very different sort of work from what you would do in a large house like Mrs. Stuyvesant's."

"Perfectly, madam," said Maria, "but a girl is often been better for a change to the work, does not madam think so? And I do not mind to work. I am more happy to be busy. May I watch the rooms to see how many I shall have, and what time does madam dine?"

I told her and began to outline a trial dinner.

"Suppose if I should cook madam her

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dinner the best I can from what I find, and she tells me if it will suit?" said Maria gently.

And since that dinner I have never ordered another nor said anything further than, "That will be very good, I am sure, Maria."

I had not mentioned my achievement to either of the others; I don't quite know why, unless it is that we do not detail our affairs to each other as we used to. I am afraid it is possible that I felt myself justified, since Chloe had not cared to confide in me her decision about Mr. Ogden, and Sabina had not felt at liberty to discuss what Mr. Van Ness had admitted to her of the matter, in withholding my own plans and results. When, therefore, we began on our attractive little dinner, served with a gratifying lack of

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indecision, clumsiness or clatter, their surprise was all that could have been expected by a more elaborate plotter than I.

Chloe turned in her chair and stared frankly at the non-committal features under the cap—for I never saw a less vicious-looking person than our new maid.

“Maria?” she stammered.

“Yes, Miss Chloe,” said the Terrible Treasure gravely, offering her the rolls.

She makes the most delicious rolls in bewildering variety: wee pointed ones for dinner, crusty brown ones for breakfast and the most mysterious cinnamon-flavored, puffy ones for luncheon.

Sabina stared too, but at me, not Maria.

“It is the merest folly to suppose that one can possibly fathom the character of

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any one on God's earth!" she announced, "and when it comes to prophesying the actions of one's friends, what are seven years?"

"What, indeed?" I answered pointedly. Sabina did not drop her eyes, precisely, but they ceased to meet mine.

She knows very well that what I resent is not the fact that Mr. Van Ness chose to confide his disappointment to her rather than to me: that was only natural, and for that matter, I have never been able to get over a foolish little awe of him that would have made such a confidence rather alarming to me than otherwise. But why Sabina should feel that a sense of honor or propriety or whatever she may call it prevents her mentioning her information to me in any but the most guarded and evidently uncomfortable

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way, I fail to understand, especially as in the beginning we discussed it frequently and with perfect ease.

In the same way I am far from feeling that Chloe ought to rush to me, or anybody else, with the news of her engagement to Mr. Ogden, unless she wants to; though I must say that to do so would be far more like her than to act as she does at present. I understand that people are likely to be shy and contrary and undecided and prevaricating on these trying occasions (and how trying they can be I never guessed till I participated in one), but why, since she must know that Sabina is acquainted with one-half of the situation—I assume that she knows it: her intuition ought to tell her a thing like that, if there is anything in popular theories—should she not indicate something of

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the other half by even the faintest appeal for my sympathy or congratulation, whichever she may want? To go on from day to day, implying that nothing has happened or is likely to happen, in view of the circumstances is simply disingenuous. And I haven't even the satisfaction of saying so to Sabina, because we don't discuss the matter at all, for some reason.

We don't discuss very much of anything, in fact. I had not realized how much we have been held together and kept off the thin ice of real intimacy, of late, by our more or less humorous domestic misadventures. Now that there are no more of these—for no hotel could move on its daily way more smoothly and uneventfully than does our little house—conversation lags, and one almost regrets the excitements of Mamie's stupidity, May's tyranny, and Mary's superiority.

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It is the irony of the fate that watches over housekeepers that now, when we are in a position to entertain our friends easily, with no worry and effort, we seem to have no friends to entertain. Mr. Van Ness comes no more; Mr. Ogden, in a hurried note addressed to me, beginning "Dear and charming ladies," regrets that great pressure of business, incident to the settling of two large estates of which he has recently been appointed manager, keeps him at work in his office on Saturday and reading in the law library on Sunday; and as neither Sabina nor Chloe suggests inviting any other guests, I hold my peace. I asked Chloe if there was no one she would care to have for the week-end, and she replied hastily,

"Heavens, no! It will be a great comfort to be alone for once, and get some mending and letters done!"

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This I accepted politely at its face value; I understood that while there was even a chance of Mr. Ogden's getting out on Sunday evening, she wanted to keep it free for him. But I was a little surprised when on asking Sabina if she would like to work in one of her semi-business luncheons on Sunday she told me that it was not in the least necessary to do that; it was simpler, on the whole, to take people out in town.

"And then it doesn't bother you," she added considerably.

There were only two weak points in this: one of Sabina's reasons for coming out here was to give her an opportunity to entertain in just this way, and at present it would not bother me at all.

Not that I particularly expect this

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smooth-flowing household current to continue: I have given up any expectations along those lines. Whether I had stumbled on the solution of the problem, and might count on living peaceably under Maria's efficient management for an indefinite period, or whether, as Chloe warned me, we were basking in the lull before the tornado, and might wake any morning to find our few jewels gone and the wreck of a wild debauch littering our placid home, who could tell? In either case I cannot see that the risk involved was any greater than that of Solly's measles, which might have been malignant diphtheria.

When I mentioned this view of the case to Chloe she looked at me in amazement.

"You of all people!" she cried. "Did

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Anna tell you about the dreadfully queer persons that came to see the Paragon? And the way she would disappear for two days at a time?"

"I did not engage Maria for the sublimity of her moral qualities," said I. "I had in view her capacity for accomplishing the definite duties required of her, and so long as she does these I cannot see that her personal character is any concern of mine. Do you know that the piano-tuner is not a bigamist, or what guarantee have you that your dentist is not a confirmed gambler?"

She gasped and shook her head.

"She has bewitched you!" she declared.

"We should never have acquired her but for you," I returned affably.

I do not think she has bewitched me,

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though it is certainly very pleasant to be so well looked after. Ever since the second day of her reign, when she appeared before me in the later afternoon to remark deferentially, "I have laid out the silk blouse for madam, and if she could be willing to come upstairs for this time, before I begin at my dinner, I shall help her with her dress," I have never lacked the services of a personal maid, to such extent as my simple habits require one. My room is kept in beautiful order; my bureau drawers, though arranged after a fashion not always intelligible to me, display a system well worth a little mental effort; the book I am reading, the embroidery I am at work on, are sure to be near my hand.

Mamie always bore me a grudge, I know, for interfering, as I often had to,

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with her decorative leisure; May frankly admired Chloe to the exclusion of the rest of the family, and took a keen interest in her matrimonial possibilities; Mary, in so far as she had any respect for people of our low ideals, reserved it for Sabina's professional success and money-earning capacities. But Maria, though faultless in her deference toward the other two, reserves her personal interest for me—I suppose in my office as her employer. Me only she calls “madam,” for me she mends and brushes, and cleans boots and gloves. To me she confided the existence and address of a little dressmaker employed occasionally by Anna Stuyvesant, with great success but at small expense, who would undoubtedly do something for me, at Maria's request, if approached before the autumn rush; and I found

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myself this morning with two very pretty dresses that seem cheap even to my necessarily economical eyes.

If Chloe knew what had happened last night she would undoubtedly attribute my surprising indifference concerning the catastrophe to the fact of those two dresses; but honestly, I think I should have acted precisely the same without the clothes. I have not even told them—I don't know that I shall.

Yesterday it seemed that Chloe's intuition had not played her false, for a telegram from Mr. Ogden begged that he might come to luncheon after all, to-day, his work having unexpectedly shortened itself. I arranged with Maria for an exceptionally nice luncheon, and when I had ascertained that Sabina would be busy in her study all the afternoon I promptly

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decided to flee to my room after luncheon and bring these chapters to what is, I suppose, almost their close. My leaving the two alone must show that the necessity for anything else is at an end, now, and may precipitate an explanation at last.

I waited long after the others had gone to bed to catch Maria on her way upstairs and ask her about the chicken for luncheon—the poultry man is very unreliable—but she did not come. I went down to the kitchen; she was not there, and the disorder of every stage of dinner crowded the room. Twice during the night I stole to the door, but Maria never passed it. At eight o'clock this morning I looked again; only the discouraging picture of last night greeted me.

Maria could not possibly have known

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that we were invited to breakfast at half-past nine with one of our neighbors, for the invitation was delivered after dinner, and only its originality—we were to eat some freshly caught fish which our host guaranteed his ability to bring home—induced us to accept it as hastily as it was offered. But I knew it, and I did not mention to Chloe or Sabina what else I knew, or that we had no other available breakfast. The informal little party prolonged itself unexpectedly; it was nearly twelve before we started home, and still I had not spoken—I don't know why. I was planning a drive to the shore, and luncheon there, as we opened the hall door, when a glance into the dining-room arrested my steps. The table was nearly set and around it flew Maria, haggard and white, one hand pressed to her head,

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the other feverishly straightening the lunch cloths!

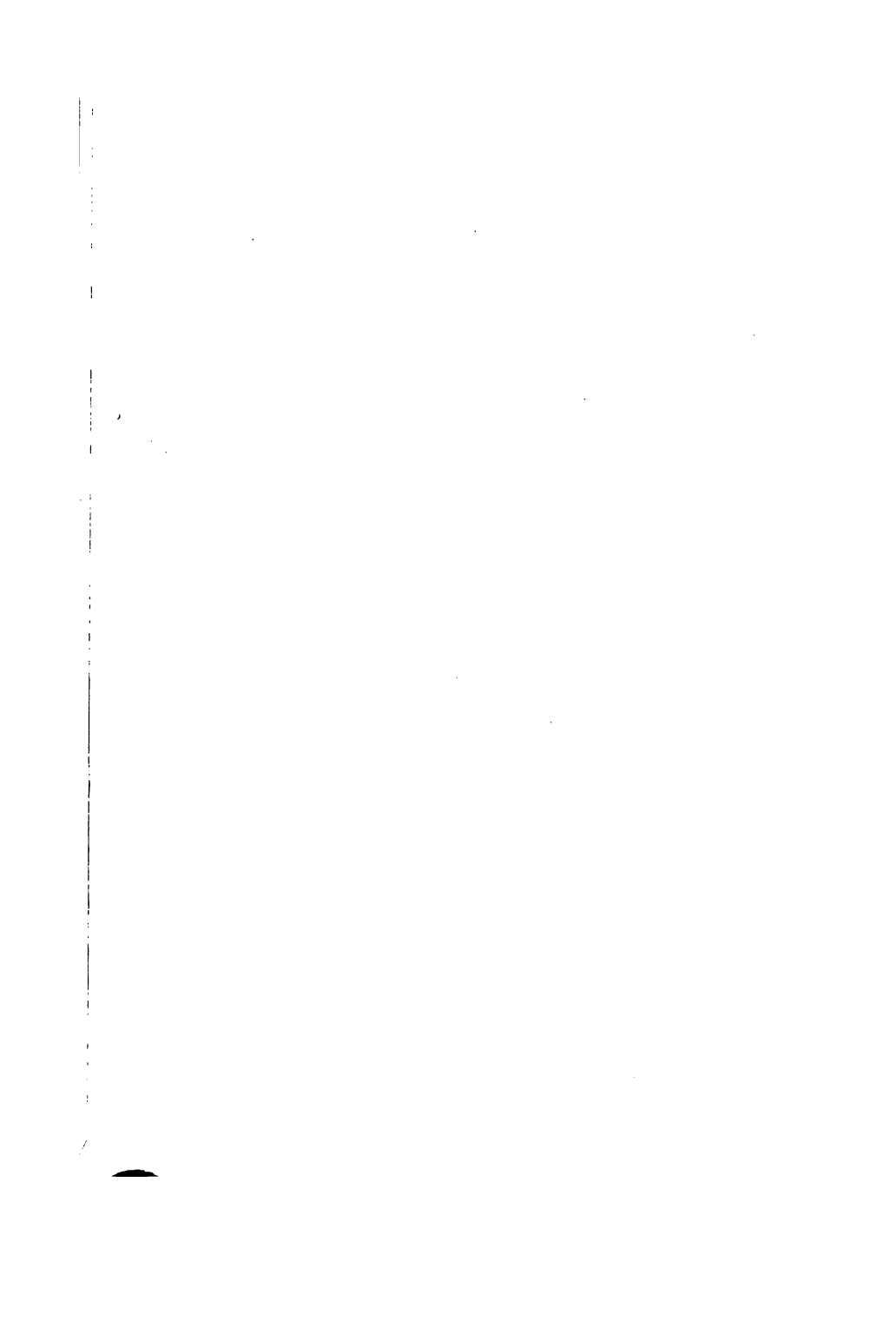
She did not look at me, and I changed my dress unaided; since she had taken time to make the beds and arrange the rooms, I knew that the luncheon must suffer—but still I did not speak.

I might have spared myself any worry, for the luncheon, though quite different from the one I had planned, was perfect. Oysters—September has brought its advantage—bouillon that only I would suspect of beef tablets, fluffy omelet, a salad that baffled even me, and peaches, the ripest we have had this year, appeared in turn before us, and if Maria's face was drawn and her hand trembled, who noticed it but her "madam" ?

Not Sabina, for her mind was utterly away from us; she was withdrawn, though



"So I have left them all alone and sat here writing all the afternoon, with the subdued sound of voices below me on the porch."



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her outward courtesy was perfect. Not Chloe, she was too gay and excited: I have rarely seen her more brilliant. After luncheon, suddenly, she ran ahead into the living-room, while Mr. Ogden stopped to light his cigar, and kissed me tumultuously, even as I was telling her that my head ached and I must excuse myself.

“You dear!” she whispered, looking at me so strangely, “you perfect old dear!”

I went away quickly; the swift caress, so like our old Chloe, moved me too much. So I have left them alone, and sat here writing all the afternoon, with the subdued sound of voices below me on the porch, and a strong odor of tobacco smoke drifting downward through the hall—oh, yes, it is from Maria’s room; it is useless to deny it! She dragged her-

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self heavily up the stairs an hour ago, and I heard the bed creak as she flung herself down on it.

I do not seem able to decide definitely what to do; of course something must be done. But I am glad Chloe had such a nice luncheon before the break came.

The late afternoon is chilly now; the leaves and the dusk are falling together. My head really does ache, and I think I will try to take a little nap: I wonder if Maria's dreams are as troubled as mine will be.

For she is such a good servant—though she is so bad!

PART V

MAMIE'S AUNT

PERHAPS the strangest thing of all is that I should still have this book. Indeed, I have very little else! Through all that wild, confused, unbelievable night I clutched this absurd fat account-book: no King's messenger trusted with the crown jewels could have guarded them more devotedly than I this fragmentary record of our life here—my poor character study! Not that I intended to protect it so jealously, of course; there were a hundred things I needed more, a dozen things I wept over when I realized that I had neglected them in its favor. But at the time I had no choice: I suppose if I had been holding a tooth-brush when it happened, I should be prizing that tooth-

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brush now as my choicest—because my only—possession.

And yet, what does it matter? What does anything matter now? It was only a week ago, and it might have been centuries, life is such a different thing. If any one had told me, a week ago, that I should soon be recording the loss of my two new dresses, my mother's silver, and my Whistler etching with such philosophical placidity, I should have thought that person mad—and yet I felt more miserable a week ago, when I had them, than I can ever feel again, I am sure. For now, whatever may happen to me, I shall know—but I must try to tell it as it happened.

Whether I can ever show it to Sabina is another question: sometimes I feel that it would be the simplest possible vindica-

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tion of my conduct. No one could read it, I am sure, and not see that I was perfectly sincere, though I may have been stupid. I seem to myself now to have been moving in a thick, uncomfortable mist, through which everything loomed distorted and deceptive, while I stumbled resentfully against my own unfamiliar shadow.

But could I show it to her, when I have it completed? For I want to finish it, for my own satisfaction. In its pathetically unsuccessful way—because as I read it through I see that it is not a character study at all: at least not in the way I meant it to be—it covers what was surely a most important part of more than one life that is very dear to me. Perhaps, years from now, when Sabina and I are both old, we may laugh over it together. . . .

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I was not very happy last Sunday. The excitement of the luncheon, the worry about Maria, the dread of hunting for some one to take her place, when I was conscious of never having so little interest to bring to the task, all combined to verify the headache I had pleaded when I left Chloe; and I got out of my pretty new frock wearily, slipped on a heavy bath wrapper, for the dusk was chilly, and there were no fires upstairs, and relinquished myself to the sleep I hoped would come.

At first, I remember, it seemed impossible to lose myself. A procession of curiosities tramped through my brain; what was Sabina thinking of, there in the study by herself? What was it that had shut us off from each other? Once or twice lately I had caught her looking at me so in-

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tently, so doubtfully, but just as she might have spoken she had glanced away and the moment had passed.

What were Chloe and Mr. Ogden saying, together in the living-room? Blessing me and my tact in leaving them, doubtless, but after that, what? What did people say in those circumstances? How ridiculous it was not to know: almost any kitchen-maid might have told me.

What was Maria meditating, racked with the terrible headache that had drawn her face into those unmistakable lines? Chloe had been right—it was the lull before the tornado: had the tornado passed, then, or would she round out her experience and murder us in our beds that night? Had our humble bottle of cooking sherry been responsible?

From one query to another I tossed

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clammy wrapped around my face, that strengthened me even while it stifled, but I protested weakly. I knew that I was dead, and that this was the Judgment Day, but I wanted to stay where I was: it was less trouble.

“I didn’t think it would be so rough,” I thought, as the bell scolded and slapped me and the pain stabbed my chest.

“Give her the pail right in the face,” said the bell gruffly, “and if she don’t come round, we’ll pass her out the window—the stairs is too far gone for carryin’ her down.”

An icy flood poured over my face and neck, and spluttering, gasping, crying, I fought back to life.

Oh, yes, I remembered Maria—she was killing me with smoke. But what was that shiny boat-like hat on her head? Was she

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really a man—had she always been? Had Mr. Ogden always known it, and was that what made him so white? He was pulling me to my feet.

“Can you climb through the window out on the roof?” he said quickly, “that will be so much easier—that’s it—hurry now! Here—hold this towel over your mouth.”

It was not Maria—it was a fireman. The room was dense with choking smoke; a confused clang and whistle and hiss, as of water on flames, deafened me.

Mr. Ogden jumped through the window—his coat was off and his collar was very soiled—and pulled me through after him. I had only one hand free to reach to him, for the other held fast to something that I felt I must never give up, though I was not quite sure what it was.

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We stood on the roof of the little side porch; below us a crowd of people ran about in a darkness lit by a terrible, irregular glare that seemed to surround us: its heat scorched my face.

"We are like Daniel in the lions' den," I said suddenly to Mr. Ogden: my voice was rough and broken, and surely that was not quite what I meant?

He held my hand reassuringly, though he looked anxiously into my eyes.

"What's that?" she shouted in my ear. "I am Ogden—Howard Ogden, you know! The house is on fire—don't try to talk—I thought we'd never find you!"

"Oh, yes," I said, "our house. So it is. Does Sabina know?"

He smiled in relief at me, and I saw that his moustache was burned nearly off.

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"Here's the ladder," he called suddenly. "Don't be all night with it, down there!—There's plenty of time"—as he turned to me. "Can you put your foot just there, and come down slowly after me? I'm right below you. Don't look down, please—just watch the top of the ladder."

I slipped over the edge, clumsily, because my left hand still grasped the thing I must be careful not to lose. But still I did not know what it was.

It seemed to me that I travelled down that shaking ladder for hours. From time to time I heard an anxious voice behind me, as I stopped for breath:

"That's good! That's it! Just a few more—you're doing finely!"

At last I stepped into a cold pool of water that reached over my ankle, and

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I remembered that I had only knitted bed-slippers on my feet. Somebody half carried me through a wet, chattering crowd of strangers and seated me on a pile of Anna Stuyvesant's brocade pillows.

"Pretty close shave, hey?" a man beside me called out. "I didn't think you'd get her!"

"Hush!" said Mr. Ogden angrily.

"They got the piano all right, I see," said the man, "and eight dinin'-room chairs. Pretty good work, I call that, with the walls eaten right through like they were. What was the matter with you all, anyway? Wasn't you awake? Sunday's a bad day for a fire, here, you know."

Suddenly everything cleared before me: I remembered perfectly. He and

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Chloe had been talking, talking. . . . I had dropped asleep to the steady murmur of their voices. No wonder they had not noticed the fire. The pain drove through my chest again.

“Mr. Ogden, where is Sabina?” I demanded. He shook his head.

“I—I don’t know!” he said.

I gave one glance into the hissing, blackened furnace behind me; the scurrying people were like dancing demons around it.

“There goes the roof—there she goes!” cried the strange man; “whatever’s in there now, stays!”

A roaring crash seemed to drown me, like dark waters, and I fainted for the first time in my life.

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jar, a sense of motion, and quiet voices very near me.

“It will be all right, I am sure,” said one voice, “it is only the shock. The man said she was talking and sitting up easily, and he saw her come down the ladder—she can’t be hurt.”

“I am very glad,” this was a man’s voice; “she is a dear creature—I have grown much attached to her, really.”

“I wish she reciprocated the attachment.” Just then this voice grew a little louder and I knew it for Sabina’s. That soft movement under my head must be Sabina’s shoulder, and I was half sitting, half lying against her.

“The trouble is, she is afraid of you!”

“Of me? Impossible!”

That was Mr. Van Ness. I could not

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seem to move nor open my eyes, but I knew now where I was. I was propped against Sabina on the back seat of the English cart and Mr. Van Ness must be leaning over toward us from the front, while he drove slowly along.

“ You didn’t tell her, then, this afternoon? ”

I felt Sabina’s head shake.

“ I couldn’t,” she murmured. “ I can’t seem to find a suitable opportunity——”

“ My dear Sabina! And you have been close friends for seven years!”

“ That may be the reason.” I have never heard Sabina’s voice so meek.

“ And I am to stay away indefinitely, then? ”

“ Oh, no! O Hunter, I am so glad you came!”

The rumble stopped suddenly, at a soft

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word to the horses, and I felt that we were no longer moving. Something, some one was bending over me.

“Be careful,” Sabina breathed—but it was surely not her face, so close to mine?—“she is fast asleep!”

“Then why need I be careful?”

I tried to move, but warm rugs covered me to the chin and weakness bound me hand and foot. Besides, I was crowded tightly against Sabina’s shoulder as she leaned over me.

“It was ten days, my dear, ten long days.” The whisper was close in my ear.

“But I wrote you every day!”

I could not distinguish one whisper from the other, now. My head whirled; I knew that I must open my eyes or lose my consciousness again. Something that

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I clutched in my hand began to bruise it and the hurt helped to waken me. With a long breath I forced my eyes open and stared into the black sky sprinkled with stars.

We began to move slowly along a country road; I saw the arching trees. A broad, square-shouldered back rose straight before me, and I was no longer pressed against Sabina's shoulder.

"Are you better, dear?"

Her voice was again the voice I knew and was sure of. "This is Mr. Van Ness."

"I see," I said briefly.

"He—he drove over to call on us just before the fire was discovered and—and I went with him for a little drive. So I was not there when it broke out so terribly."

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"I see," I said again.

And indeed I saw. All my past blindness rolled away like mist before me, and in the light of my new knowledge everything perplexing in the last weeks fell into its simple place.

What a fool I had been! Of course he would not marry Chloe—he did not want to. Perhaps he had never wanted to. No wonder he had not come to see us when Solly was sick: Sabina was not there. He could see her in town. No wonder he had taken Pluto to drive—though I know he does not like dogs. And that was why he looked so earnestly from Sabina to me the night of the brandied peaches—he was wondering why she did not tell me or why I did not guess!

And Chloe had always known that it would be Mr. Ogden, after all. O foolish,

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flirting Chloe, how could you let me stay so blind, when you could have settled it all so easily? But even then I tried to be just to Chloe. Who was I, I thought bitterly, to judge of what a girl should do under the spell of that strange emotion that held Sabina dumb and constrained with her oldest friend and kept even the young lovers unsettled and uncertain? My losses seemed so varied and so undeserved that I hardly knew which I felt the most.

“I heard you talking, a moment ago, Sabina,” I said softly, under the rumble of the wheels, “before I could tell you so. I know about it, now. I must have seemed very stupid. I hope you will be very happy.”

“I wanted you to learn to like him,” she murmured, “and I thought you

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wouldn't, if I told you too soon. You will, when you know him, really. I couldn't seem to explain to you—you were so—so difficult. . . .”

“Was I? I am sorry. I have always admired him very much,” I said wearily.

“Why don't I care more? It is the end of seven years,” I thought, in a sort of dull amazement.

And that was all that we said, Sabina and I. I did not really expect her to cry and kiss me and tell me how it happened—forty cannot be seventeen again, and Sabina was always self-contained—but somehow I should have thought it would bring us a little nearer—if only because we were to part so soon.

“But perhaps I am difficult,” I thought sadly; I was really very tired.

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"Where are we going, Sabina?" I whispered.

"Why, you know, dear, there isn't any house," she told me gently. "It went like tinder—the walls must have been smouldering all the afternoon. Hunter has stationed half a dozen men there to guard everything there is left, and we'll come over in the morning, if you feel strong enough. We are going to his sister's. It is only nine now, and you can get a good night's rest and be well taken care of."

"Oh, no, no!" I cried, "I can't go there, Sabina—I don't want to! I mean, I have only my bath robe!"

It was not very polite, but I had not strength enough for politeness; and the idea of that big, elaborate house with its corridors of formal guest rooms shook my last shred of self-control.

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"You go, Sabina, pray do, but don't take me!" I wailed, "oh, don't!"

"But where *will* you go, my dear?" she asked patiently. "I particularly thought you wouldn't care for any of the neighbors' houses. Is there any quiet place you can think of where we could be comfortable?"

There flashed into my mind the picture of a clean and quiet kitchen, bright with a scoured, red-mouthed stove, fragrant of new bread, hospitable and peaceful; through the open door I glimpsed the company bed, with a fringed counterpane, and the deep rocking-chair and geranium pot beside it. It had been my refuge in more than one season of despair, that little cottage on the skirts of the village, and it would take me in now.

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“Ask him to drive to Mamie’s aunt,” I begged her, and there he drove.

She had just returned from the fire and she had a cup of steaming, fragrant tea for me and some buttered toast.

“It’s me that thought you’d be along, miss,” she said cheerfully. “She’ll just know there’s the loan of a bed ready for her, says I—and Miss Archbold, too, if she’ll take the half of it.”

Sabina hesitated, but I seized her hand.

“Please go with Mr. Van Ness, Sabina,” I begged her, “I am just where I want to be and—oh, please go!”

She looked at me steadily a moment—was there pity in her handsome eyes?—then nodded her head.

“I don’t think you could do better than stay, my dear,” she said, in her

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competent, sagacious way, "and I'll come in early to-morrow. Mamie's aunt will do everything—good heavens, who is that?"

A wild dishevelled figure dashed into the little kitchen. Collarless, vestless, grimy and black with smoke, Mr. Ogden turned his white face with its burned moustache toward Mamie's aunt.

"Is she here? I ran all the way—nobody knew—oh, thank God!" he cried.

It burst on me suddenly that I was responsible for her and that he had taken it for granted I had her with me—perhaps he had told her to stay by me and trusted her to do it.

I got up, stumbling in my wet bedroom slippers.

"Chloe isn't here, Mr. Ogden," I said

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unsteadily, "I am afraid you lost her in helping me. But she is surely safe—she was on the piazza with you——"

"Oh, she's all right," he interrupted irritably. "What happened to you? You nearly frightened me to death! I thought—I thought you might have gone back into that—oh, I don't know *what* I thought!"

He seized my wrists and pushed me back against the wall. His face worked nervously. Something in his eyes made my heart beat to suffocation.

"But, Chloe," I repeated like a parrot, "Chloe——"

His eyes frightened me.

"*Will* you stop muttering 'Chloe' at me?" he stormed, shaking my wrists; "you little idiot, don't you know it's you, you, *you!*"

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Nobody need try to tease me with descriptions of how stupidly I stared at him: I knew at the time that my eyes were perfectly blank, though I really don't believe that my jaw dropped, as they say.

"Me?" I said vaguely, "me?"

His eyes were too near: I could not see them.

When I opened my own, we were alone in the room; I remember there had been a quick rustle of skirts just before—before I shut them, and the sound of a closing door. But if Sabina and Mamie's aunt had foreseen what was about to happen, it was more than I had. You see it had never happened to me before.

It happened frequently just then, however, for as Mr. Ogden explained to me, it was the only thing that could stop

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my explaining to him why he must have meant Chloe all the time!

"Why, Sabina thought so!" I assured him.

He smiled cheerfully. "She doesn't think so now, does she?" he inquired, and again I blushed, as I thought of myself pushed against the wall, and again it happened.

"But I—I am thirty-four!" I cried, "it's all wrong—I am old enough to be——"

"Are you going to say, my mother?" he interrupted me quickly, "because I am thirty-one, and I believe I was older than you when I was born! If you are not old enough to know when a man is head over ears in love with you—why, see here, I should never marry anybody else, if you were *forty-four*!"

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I may not be young enough to believe this, but oh, I am quite young enough to enjoy it! I think I shall never be so old that the memory of it will not make me happy.

“But at the first—the very first, surely you came to see her?”

He nodded.

“Why, yes,” he said honestly; “she’s an awfully jolly girl—I came to call. The way you go to call on girls, you know. She’s certainly a mighty entertaining young woman,” he added reflectively. “But you—oh, you’re different!” His eyes caught mine again and again they frightened me (but this time I knew what would happen).

“You’re the *dearest* thing, you know!” he said eagerly.

And just then the last drop of doubt

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and indecision melted out of my happy heart. (It is surprising how one grows accustomed to its happening.)

I felt him shivering—Mamie's aunt has told me how his coat caught fire on the way to my room—and while I began to pour some tea for him he noticed my wet bed-slippers.

“Heavens, you poor child, what was Miss Archbold thinking of?” he cried—the idea of Sabina's attending to my slippers!—and he threw open the bedroom door.

“Has nobody here a dry pair of shoes?” he called reprovingly.

Sabina and Mamie's aunt emerged from the bedroom—there was no other door out—and fell upon me apologetically.

“And her hair drippin' with the

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water!" cried the good woman. "Come with me, deary, and I've got the very pink-striped dress you give Mamie clean in the drawer, and the slippers Miss Chloe give her for the Firemen's Ball! But you've had enough o' firemen, I'm thinkin'. An' indeed I wish you joy from my heart, miss, for it's you that deserve it!"

Sabina put her arms around me and kissed me. We have never kissed very much, she and I—perhaps that is why we have kept our friendship so long—and I cannot describe how contented it made me.

"I have never been really satisfied till now," she said softly, though I am sure she did not mind Mr. Ogden's hearing.

"Leave me y'r shoes f'r the oven, Mr. Ogden, dear," said Mamie's aunt, "and I've the stylistest sweater vest here, just

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done up, that the gentleman that owns it'll be proud to give ye the lend of. With y'r face washed an' a drop o' somethin' in ye, ye'll be y'r own man again!"

My hair was not yet dry, so Sabina braided it for me in two braids—all my family have long hair—and buttoned Mamie's pink-striped gown. She nearly put on my shoes, but even on that night of nights I felt that there were limits to what should happen!

"Sabina," I said suddenly, "be honest with me. Is it unwise? Am I too old for him?"

She turned me about so that I faced the little shell-framed mirror.

"Look at that, you stupid, dear thing," said she. But I shall not always have such rosy cheeks, and excitement brightens any one's eyes.

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When I went back into the kitchen Mr. Van Ness stood there, warming his hands at the fire. I took my courage in both hands and walked straight up to him.

"I know about you and Sabina, now, Mr. Van Ness," I said hurriedly, "I—I heard, in the cart, but I could not wake up exactly. I am sorry I kept you away for ten days. But I thought you—I thought it was Chloe, you see."

He stared at me, and I was terribly conscious of my school-girl pig-tails.

"You thought it was Chloe?" he repeated uncomprehendingly.

"To marry her, you know," I explained feebly.

He looked positively frightened for a moment.

"But—but—how extraordinary!" he exclaimed. "How could any one—surely

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no one could see Miss Archbold and—not that she is not a most attractive young woman—dear me, and extremely vivacious; it is a pleasure to meet her, I'm sure, but—oh, you are not in earnest, really! Ever since I met her—” and when he smiles I wonder how I could have been afraid of him for a moment—“I have admired Miss Archbold more than any woman I ever saw. You understand that, I am sure—she tells me you are such old friends.”

“You cannot admire her too much,” I told him soberly; had I always been quite fair to Sabina of late?

She came in with Mr. Ogden, looking like a college boy in his sweater vest, and I shall never, no matter what grand cook Sabina may have, eat a more delicious supper than Mamie's aunt served us that

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night. It was only tea and toast and scrambled eggs "with a frazzle o' ham in 'em"; but the hot tea warmed and quieted me, the toast was fresh and golden brown, and across the table—but I suppose I shall grow used to his eyes.

"How much have they succeeded in saving, Hunter?" Sabina asked, when we had forgotten how long ago it was that we lunched.

"The piano and the dining-room chairs," he began.

"The Stuyvesants'," I said.

"A number of pieces of brocade and silk hangings——"

"Again the Stuyvesants'," said Sabina.

"A bronze head on a large pedestal, and a small Dutch silver tray. I am afraid that is all," he concluded.

Sabina and I looked at each other.

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Everything that Anna Stuyvesant had loaned us was safe, and nothing else in the world!

"Have they any idea how it could have begun?" inquired Sabina calmly.

I longed for the floor to open and swallow me up.

"Sabina," I stammered, "I shall have to tell you—it was Maria. She *did* smoke!"

They looked hard at me, and suddenly they all began to laugh.

"The firemen swore it began in the attic, and I faced them up and down it didn't," said Mr. Ogden finally, when they had finished.

"—In bed," I went on sadly, "and I knew it. And she must have fallen asleep. Oh, where is Maria? Was she——"

"She was not," said Mr. Ogden, sud-

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denly grave. "She is alive, though she doesn't deserve to be, for she told me there was no one left upstairs when I helped her out." He looked at me and his mouth twitched. "She asked me for a dollar and headed for the station," he continued with an effort at lightness, "and I doubt if you see Maria again—in view of the facts!"

"Sabina," I cried penitently, "all your lovely books! And I engaged her! Oh, I will never trust my judgment again!"

"I should think not," said Mr. Ogden—but his eyes were kind and oh, I was sure I was not too old!—"your judgment, indeed! Do you know," and he smiled on us all delightedly, "she pretends to have supposed that I was going to marry Miss Chloe! As if," with an

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audacious, confidential air, "I could dream of supporting that brilliant young thing in the style to which her—friends are accustomed!"

"I'm afraid there is a great deal in that," Sabina began gravely, "I have always feared—" But she never finished.

"Sabina!" I cried, "where *is* Chloe?"

We dropped our teacups and stared guiltily at one another. It was too unbelievable.

"I—I thought she was with you, of course," said Mr. Ogden, half rising and looking at Sabina and Mr. Van Ness. "When I left her to get that—when I went for Maria, she was running for some one to bring the piano out, and after that I—I lost track of her; she wouldn't stay where I told her to. When I went to get you—" he looked at me, and I wondered

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that I could ever have supposed there was any one else for him—" when it occurred to me that you might really be in that—that—" He paused and swallowed hard.

"And afterward, when you fainted, I ran for some brandy," he went on, "and when I got back you were gone. A man there said that a lady and gentleman came and got you in a carriage, and I supposed it was she, of course." He scowled at Mr. Van Ness, who cleared his throat and pushed away his chair.

"And I supposed she was with you—of course," he answered with an accusing glance at Mr. Ogden. "I inquired of the firemen and they assured me that you and she had been most active in saving what could be got out—I took it for granted she was safe with you, when Miss Arch-

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bold and I hurried away with this poor lady."

Sabina and I said nothing, but I am sure our thoughts were dreadfully alike. There was no disguising it: we had both of us completely forgotten Chloe.

The two men started together for the door without a word from either of us. But before they reached it a soft thumping shook it.

"Mamie's aunt! O Mamie's aunt!" some one called. We listened breathlessly.

"Oh, may I come in, Mamie's aunt?" The voice was half laughing, half appealing.

"I can't remember your name, Mamie's aunt, I'm so excited, but I knew you'd take me in, and I'm too wet to come unless you tell me I may, and my hands are full!"

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The door pushed open slowly and Chloe stumbled into the room, her skirts kilted to her knees, her shoes and stockings drenched, her lap full of some small, clattering objects. She paused and her bright, questioning eyes moved quickly from one to the other of our little group.

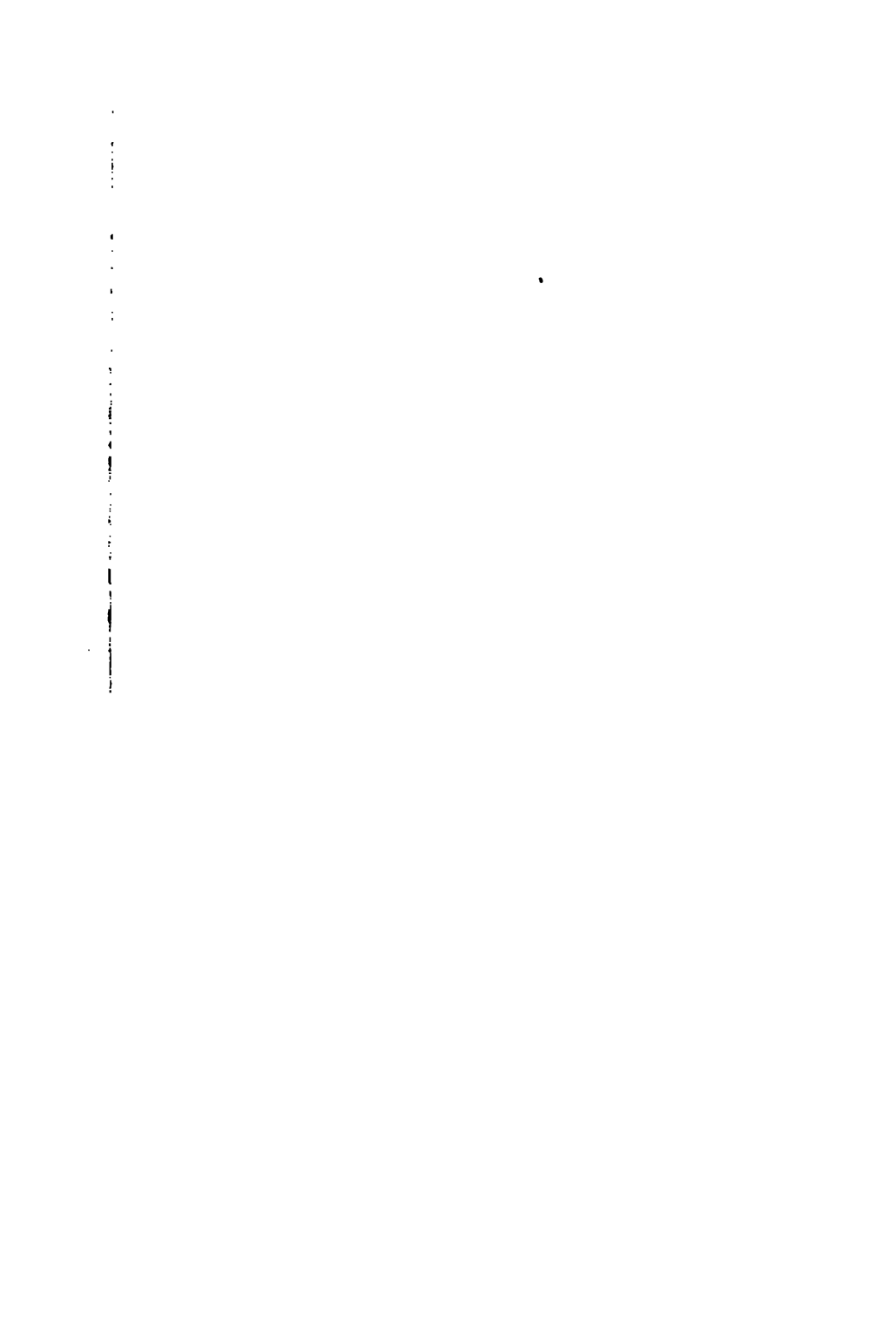
I suppose my nerves were not quite steady yet, for at the thumping on the door I had stepped hastily over to Mr. Ogden; Mr. Van Ness stood behind Sabina's chair with one hand on it.

What passed through the girl's mind I do not know. Sometimes I think I saw more in her darting eyes than I like to remember: again I am sure there was only excitement and relief at finding us.

"A meeting of the survivors!" she cried. "Are we all safe and—and happy?"



The door pushed open slowly and Chloe stumbled into the room.



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Sabina moved toward her.

"My dear, dear child," she said eagerly, "what must you think of us? We thought—they supposed——"

"Ogden and I each thought you were with the other," said Mr. Van Ness frankly.

Chloe's eyes rested a tiny moment on his.

"Ah!" she murmured. And that was all.

"I should love some tea, Mamie's aunt," she said a moment later. "Wasn't it thrilling? I saved these myself—they are Satterlee Stuyvesant's old English salt cellars! I suppose you know there's practically nothing else? We've none of us a rag. You ought to braid your hair like that all the time: doesn't he think so?"

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Mamie's aunt got her dry and we bustled over her tea.

"Wasn't it great luck about the insurance, though?" she mumbled with her mouth full of toast.

Sabina and I stared at each other.

"I believe you had forgotten!" she cried. "Dear, dear, it takes a thrifty spinster like me to remember—and you had other things to think of, evidently!"

A loud jarring sound grew every moment louder, and culminated at our door.

"It's the Panhard," said Chloe, starting up, "'Anna telephoned she'd sent it. We'll come over in the morning—I'm dead for some sleep. Satterlee *did* hope those chairs had burned, he said!"

She was at the door before we knew it.

"Good-by, my dears—and bless you!"

"But Chloe," I began, "won't you——"

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She flew across the room and dipped over me in a sudden kiss.

"To-morrow!" she persisted, "to-morrow! I'm—I'm so tired, dears both! Give me a night's rest, and I'll dance at the weddings—to-morrow!"

She was gone. We heard the great car back slowly around and snort off.

"A most attractive girl," said Mr. Van Ness thoughtfully. "Such tremendous vitality . . . a little excitable, though. Had we not better start, my—Miss Archbold?"

They went out and the rumble of the cart died away.

"I suppose you couldn't wear it in braids like that, could you?" said Mr. Ogden.

I looked hastily at the bedroom door (after it had happened) to see if Mamie's

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aunt was coming back, and there on the threshold I saw a scorched, black account-book.

"See what you saved!" I cried. It was that I had clutched, all through the smoke and down the ladder and in the high cart!

I need not tell what he said, because I cannot pretend that this is any longer a character study.

Mamie's aunt put me to bed.

"It'll be nice for you, miss, in goin' to housekeepin', to have that fine Swede girl, I'm thinkin'," she said, "you'll not have to raise your hand."

I looked at my hand thoughtfully; it was not Maria's fault that I could raise it at that moment! And yet could I have summoned the strength of character to dismiss her? I am glad I did not have to try.

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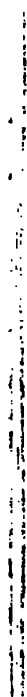
“ O Mamie’s aunt!” I cried, patting her gratefully, “ why is it, *why* is it that bad servants are so good and good servants are so bad? ”

She shook her head philosophically and blew out my lamp.

“ An’ often I’ve thought, dear, ’tis the same way with th’ husbands,” she said, “ an’ them that can manage the one can mostly manage the other! So maybe what you’ve learnt ’ll come in handy, like.”

But I, alone with happiness, smiled to myself in the dark.





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